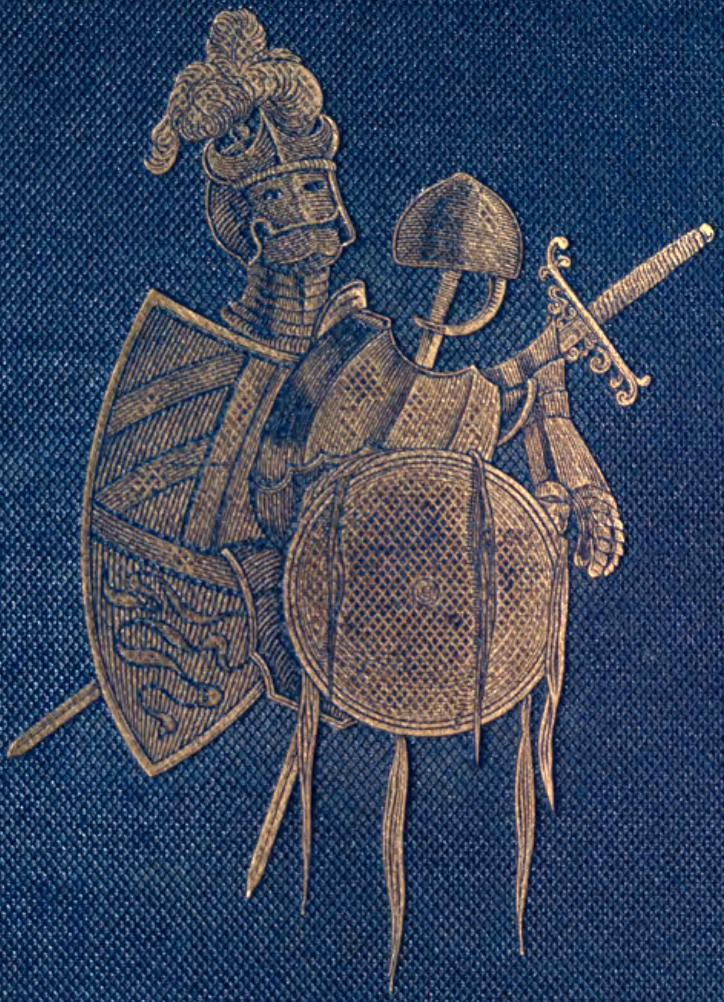

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PALADIN AND SARACEN

"Of knights and ladies, arms and loves, I sing,
Of courtesies, and feats with sword and lance;
What time the Moors were led by Afric's king
To wreak destruction on the homes of France."

. . . . . .

ARIOSTO, *Orlando Furioso*, Canto I. St. 1.

"Where in the world, Master Ludovic, did you get hold of all these tomfooleries?" — *Speech of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to Ariosto on accepting the dedication of the "Orlando."*

THE HIPPOGRIF AND HIS RIDER.—*Frontispiece.*

PALADIN & SARACEN

Stories from Ariosto

BY

H. C. HOLLWAY-CALTHROP

ILLUSTRATED BY MRS. ARTHUR LEMON

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1882

PALADIN & SARACEN

Stories from Ariosto

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1882

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TO

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIEND

LAURA GWENLLIAN RICE

I DEDICATE THESE STORIES

IN TOKEN OF LOVE

AND IN

REMEMBRANCE OF MANY HAPPY DAYS

PREFACE.

I CANNOT let these stories go forth under the title of *Stories from Ariosto* without a word of explanation—I had almost said of apology—to students of Italian literature concerning the great changes which I have introduced into their details.

For many of these changes no justification is needed, as any one who knows the original will understand. But after making every allowance for the necessary omission or alteration of some incidents, and for the consequent modification of others, there still remain cases in which, had I chosen, I might have followed my original more closely. If I am blamed for not doing so, my answer must be that I am writing for boys and girls, not for scholars or students; and this, in the case of the *Orlando*, I hold to be a valid excuse. For Ariosto was a man of keen self-conscious intellect, writing for men and women of like temper with himself, and designedly playing with his fantasies as a watchmaker may play with his mechanisms. This is just the method which only highly trained intellects can appreciate, and which seems to me quite hopelessly unsuited to children's tales. Therefore I have felt warranted in taking any liberties with my text which I judged likely to make it more attractive to the audience of my choice. On one page I have translated Ariosto almost word for word; on another I have filled in his framework with my own patterns; a

third is my own work alike in conception and execution. Obviously such patchwork as this is not designed to satisfy the canons of critical study; and I only ask that it may not be judged by standards of scholarship inappropriate to the class of play-work to which it belongs. If its colours please the eye, and its outlines stimulate the imagination, of those for whom it is written, my object will be better attained than I dare to hope is the case.

And if ever I realise my wish of doing real work, helpful to students, in the fertile field of Italian letters, I will stand submissive as any sheep beneath the shears of the critics. Meanwhile, with many doubts, but also with some hope of sympathy, I appeal from them to their sons and daughters.

H. C. H.-C.

FLORENCE, *October 1882.*

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INTRODUCTION.

OF CHARLEMAGNE AND HIS PALADINS; HOW THEY FOUGHT AGAINST THE SARACENS OF AFRICA AND SPAIN, AND LOST THE BATTLE OF THE PYRENEES.

I SUPPOSE you have all heard the name of the great Emperor Charlemagne, who reigned in Paris about eleven hundred years ago, and many of whose actions you can read about in your history-books, if you will take the trouble to look them out. These, however, we will leave till lesson-time; for in this book I am going to tell you about some of the strange adventures which befell the great Emperor and his knights—adventures which are not mentioned in any of your school-books, but have been handed down to us in legends and poems of long ago, and which you will find, I hope, both interesting and amusing.

I should tell you at starting that some of those history-books speak of this wise and mighty ruler as the Emperor Charles the Great. But we will not quarrel about his name, since Charlemagne and Charles the Great mean exactly the same thing: only all through these stories we will take leave to call him Charlemagne, asking Mr. Freeman's pardon for the liberty, because that is his name in the old legends which I purpose to relate to you.

Well, Charlemagne spent a great part of his life, say the legends, in fighting against the Saracens; sometimes defending the lands of Christendom, and especially his own Kingdom of France, against their inroads, and sometimes carrying the war into their country, and delivering wide territories from their oppression. His own government ex-

tended over the whole of France, besides a good slice of what now belongs to Germany, with Paris for the capital city and seat of the Emperor; though later in his life he removed his court to Aix-la-Chapelle, where his tomb may still be seen. And all the Kings and Rulers of Europe acknowledged him for their Lord and Emperor, and did homage to him for their possessions. Only in Spain and Portugal the Saracens his enemies had firmly established their dominion, having conquered the whole Peninsula from the Christians; while in the east of Europe the Greek Emperor reigned supreme at Constantinople over a part of the countries which at present belong to Turkey.

Now at the time to which these stories belong, the Saracens were making a tremendous effort to conquer France, thinking that if once they could subdue the mighty Charlemagne, they would make an easy prey of all the rest of Europe; as indeed would certainly have been the case. For in those days no other king was strong enough to stand against them.

Their leader was the illustrious Agramant, King of Tunis in Africa, who had brought a mighty fleet, and a powerful army on board of it, from his great seaport city of Biserta. He was the wisest and most famous Prince in all the world, excepting only the Emperor Charlemagne; and at his mere command an enormous host had gathered together from all the heathen nations upon earth, to help him in his difficult enterprise.

Next in honour to him was King Marsilius, who ruled over nearly the whole of Spain; he was the firm friend and ally of King Agramant, and gave passage to the African forces through his dominions, besides joining them with all the warriors he could muster.

With them were leagued also the terrible Rodomont, King of Algiers, a giant in stature, who wore a dragon's hide for armour and was more feared by the Christians than any of his comrades; and the ferocious Mandricard, Sovereign Prince of Tartary, who had a special quarrel to prosecute, of which I shall have more to tell you later on.

There, too, were the stately King Gradasso of China,

Sacripant King of Circassia, and the wise King Sobrin, renowned no less for counsel than for valour; together with many other kings, princes, and knights, whose names would fill a hundred pages if I tried to mention them all. And each of the great leaders brought with him a strong squadron of soldiers, while there was not a knight in the camp but had at least one squire to attend him; so that King Agramant found himself at the head of the largest army that had ever been seen in Europe up to that time.

They were opposed by a host of Christians, led by chiefs of equal fame. For Charlemagne, ever since he came to the throne, had taken care to surround himself with a chosen company of knights, such as were never assembled in one court before or since. The best of them were called the Paladins of France; and this title was coveted above any other distinction by all the bravest knights of Christendom, seeing that it was an honour which could only be obtained by giving proof of uncommon skill and valour.

Foremost in this noble band was the Emperor's nephew, the peerless Count Roland, whose wonderful adventures will occupy a great part of the following tales. For which reason I will say nothing more about him at present.

Next to him we must mention his cousin Raynald, eldest son to Duke Hammon of Montalbano and heir of the great house of Clairmont, who wore the famous helmet of Mambrino which Don Quixote was so anxious to discover in after times.

Oliver and Brandimart, too, the faithful friends of Roland, were eminent in the glorious band of Paladins; and another of the number was Ogier the Dane, who plays a part in the legends of old England. There were many more besides, whose names I have no time to chronicle just now; but you will come across several of them, and will be interested, I hope, in their exploits, before we get to the end of our book.

Besides his famous company of Paladins, Charlemagne was accompanied by the King of England, his friend and ally; by the Duke of Bavaria; and by a host of other potentates more or less illustrious in their day, but about whom nobody either knows or cares anything at this distance of time.

And now that you have heard the names of a few of the most celebrated champions on each side, we can get on with our story and indulge in a taste of the fighting.

King Agramant had assembled all his forces at Barcelona, where he held a great review to see that they were in fit condition to take the field; then he sent on detachments to occupy the strong places in the range of the Pyrenees, that the Christians might not be able to molest him on his way through the pass. And when everything was arranged as he desired, he gave the command to march to the invasion of France. Meanwhile Charlemagne, finding the passes all fortified beforehand, had to content himself with taking up a strong position on the French side of the mountains; where he encamped with all his army, and prepared to give battle to the invaders before they should have time to form themselves in regular order on the plain.

So as soon as the Saracen vanguard defiled through the pass, it was fiercely attacked by the foremost squadrons of the Christian army, and suffered terrible loss in the encounter. But the innumerable Pagan hordes pressed steadily on from behind, while the place where the fight had commenced was too narrow for the main body of the French to be of any service. So the enemy managed to fight his way through, and spread gradually over the plain, forming in battle array in face of the Christians, who lost no occasion of impeding his movements and taking advantage of his confusion. Soon the battle became general, and prodigies of valour were performed by the leaders on either side. The invaders had much the best of it in numbers; but they found great difficulty in performing their evolutions under an incessant attack, and the slaughter among them was far more severe than in the ranks of their opponents. Thick as leaves before the autumn wind they fell beneath the swords of the Paladins; Roland and Oliver, Brandimart and Raynald, counted their slain by the thousand; and for a long time it seemed as though France would that day achieve a great deliverance from her foes. The Saracen chiefs, however, were not the men to be easily daunted, but gallantly maintained the struggle through all discourage-

ments, constantly bringing up fresh masses of troops to supply the posts of the slain. And presently their perseverance was rewarded, and they gained a signal victory. For the common soldiers of the French army had but small experience of warfare, and were appalled at perceiving how much weaker they were than their enemies in number; in truth the legions of slaughtered Pagans seemed as nothing in comparison with the swarms that pressed steadily forward to fill their places. And this struck such terror into the hearts of the lower ranks among the Christians, that they considered not the gallantry of their leaders, nor the advantages given them by their position, but were smitten with senseless panic, and fled headlong away from the battlefield. Vainly their captains strove to rally them; vainly the gallant Paladins attempted to bear the whole brunt of the battle, and stay by their own bravery the advancing hosts of Saracens. Their utmost efforts could only avail to maintain the unequal fight for a few hours more; but by their heroic deeds they covered themselves with glory, and saved their forces from utter destruction, giving the Emperor time to collect what troops he could, and retreat in orderly fashion from the field.

Thus the Saracens won the great Battle of the Pyrenees, and established a firm footing in the realm of France; where they maintained their position for many months, and from which they were only driven out after a number of fiercely-contested battles, as the Fourth Part of our history will show.

PART I.

THE ADVENTURES OF ROGER AND BRADAMANTE.

PALADIN AND SARACEN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW BRADAMANTE SOUGHT FOR ROGER AND CAME TO THE TOMB OF MERLIN.

MANY were the brave deeds done by the Paladins of France, and when I have told you a few of them you will easily believe that so gallant a band of knights never fought under the banner of any prince before or afterwards. But what will you say when I tell you that one of the boldest and most skilful warriors in the great Emperor's army was a gentle maiden, born of the noblest family in France? Bradamante was the name of this warlike damsel, and her father was Duke Hammon of Montalbano, so that she came of the famous house of Clairmont, and was sister to Raynald the Paladin and cousin to the peerless Roland. But though her valour in arms was such that Charlemagne esteemed her the equal of her fiery brother, yet she was gentle of heart as befitted a dame of such high degree, and dearly loved a noble young prince of the Saracen army, whom many held to be the bravest knight in all the camp of King Agramant. Roger was the name of this valiant prince, whom his comrades surnamed the Courteous, and he loved the noble Bradamante with all his heart, so that above everything in the world he longed to win her for his bride.

Now, when the battle of the Pyrenees was fairly lost, Bradamante separated herself from the retreating Paladins and set out in quest of her lover; for she had perceived

that he was not among the knights who fought around the Saracen king, and she feared that some evil chance had befallen him. She asked news of Roger from every one whom she met, but no one could tell her anything of the Courteous Prince; so she rode on alone through a vast forest and over a lofty mountain, till she came down on the other side of it to a shady valley, at the head of which a spring of clear water bubbled out from a rocky cave, and ran down between the green pastures and through the beautiful copses. By the side of the stream lay a knight, who had tied his horse to a beech-tree near the bank, and, as he seemed very sorrowful, Bradamante asked him what was his grief and whether she could do anything to help him. But he supposed her to be a man like himself, and answered her: "Sir Knight, I am truly the most wretched of men, and much I fear that no man can avail to help me. For a week ago I was leading my people to fight for the Emperor, and with me was my gentle lady in whose love is all my happiness, when suddenly there appeared in the air above us a warrior in shining armour, riding upon a winged monster with the head of a griffin and the body of a horse, who seized my lady in his arms and placed her on his own saddle, and in spite of her tears and shrieks carried her off through the air as an eagle carries a bleating lamb to his nest. Thereupon I left my soldiers to go on without their leader to the battle, and turning my horse's head I followed alone in the direction in which the robber had vanished with my lady. Three days I rode over desolate mountains and through dark forests, and on the fourth day I came to a dreary valley, in the midst of which rose a steep crag of bare rock, and on the top of the rock stood a vast castle which dazzled the eyes of all who looked upon it; for its walls and towers were built of shining steel, and not a speck of rust or dirt was to be seen on all their brilliant surface. When I saw this wonderful castle I thought that here surely was the stronghold of the robber whom I sought, and without delay I essayed to ride up to the gate; but my horse was weary from long journeying, and could not clamber up the steep rock upon which the castle was built.

So I was forced to remain in the valley below; but while I stood there, not knowing what would become of me, there came by Gradasso the King of China and the African Prince Roger, who asked me the cause of my sorrow and perplexity. And when I had told it them they clambered to the top of the rock, and seizing the horn which hung upon the gatepost, challenged the master of the castle to combat. But alas! though they were the bravest warriors upon earth, they could not prevail against this villain; for the swoop of the winged monster was swifter than the swoop of the hawk upon his prey, and their sword-thrusts were spent upon the empty air, while all the blows of their enemy fell true upon their shields and helmets. And at last, after he had wearied them awhile with this unequal battle, he stripped off the silken cover from his shield, and at the sight of it they fainted away upon the ground; for that shield is forged of enchanted steel, and whoever beholds its brilliance must fall dazzled and senseless to the earth. I too lost my senses at that terrible sight, and when I came to myself the robber and the knights had disappeared, and I was lying alone upon the ground. Thereupon I lost all hope and rode sorrowfully away, and came to this fountain, where I remain in grief and despair; for this robber is so mighty an enchanter that nothing can avail to vanquish him."

Now when Bradamante first heard the name of Roger her heart was filled with joy; but when she learned how he had fallen into the hands of the enchanter she turned pale with fear, and knew not what to think of her lover's fate, only she was resolved to go at once and try if she could not deliver him from this peril. So when the knight had finished his woful story she said: "Lead me at once, I pray you, Sir Knight, to this castle, for I must try my strength against the enchanter without delay." And the knight answered that he would gladly show her the way, but her enterprise would certainly end in disaster, for no man could hope to stand against the owner of the flying horse and enchanted shield. Therewith they set out upon their journey; but they had hardly gone a hundred yards before a messenger came up at full gallop from behind

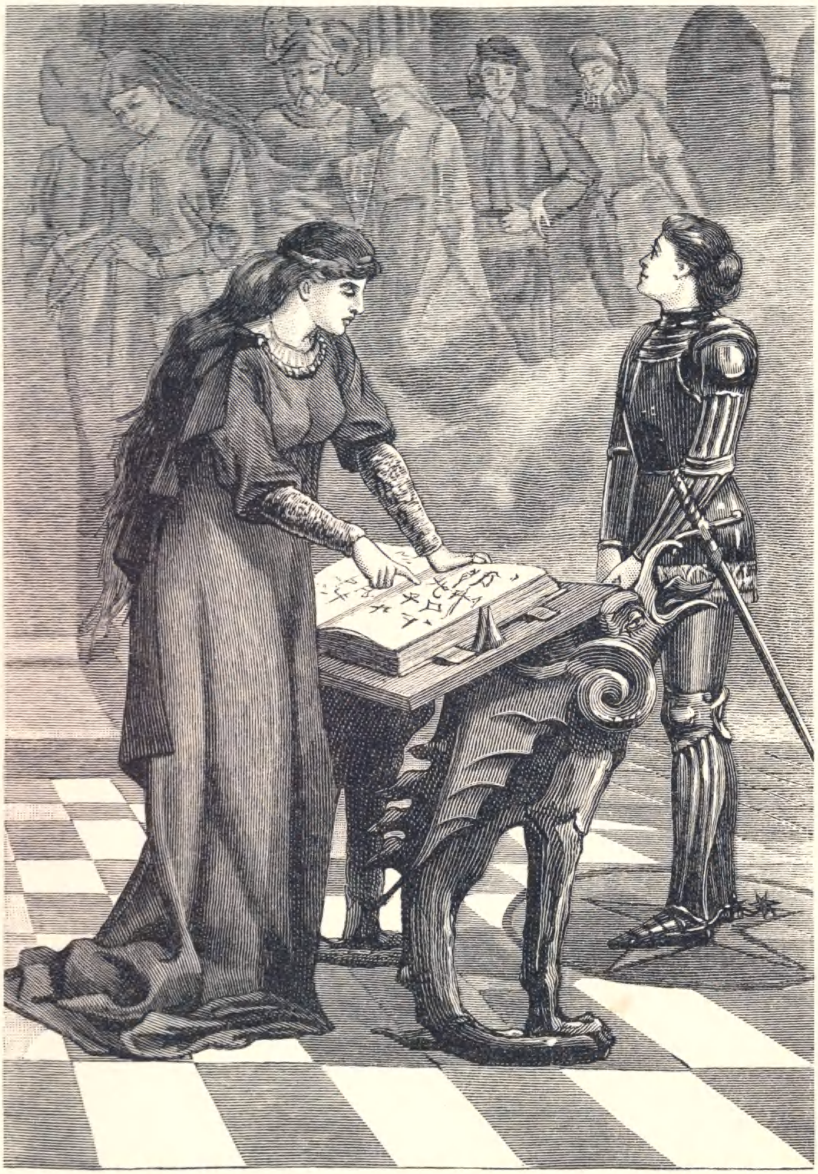
them, and calling Bradamante by name, cried: "Noble Lady, hasten to the rescue of your people, for the city of Marseilles and all the county of fair Provence is assailed by the Saracens." Now Charlemagne had appointed Bradamante governor over all Provence, and when she heard this doleful news she knew not what to do; but at length she decided to go first to the succour of the Prince, and afterwards to hurry on to the rescue of her subjects. So she bade the messenger return and say that she would come to their relief as soon as she had finished a pressing adventure; and with this answer the messenger galloped back by the way that he had come, and left her free to pursue her journey.

But a great change came over the spirit of her companion when he heard the name of Bradamante, and from that moment all gratitude for her generosity forsook him, and he thought only how he might do her a mischief. For he came of the false brood of Maganza, which was ever at enmity with the noble house of Clairmont; and of all his traitorous line this Count Pinabel—for so the knight was named—was the basest and the worst. Willingly would he have slain the noble damsel where she stood, but he knew that he could not hope to overcome her; so he meditated how he might do by treachery what he could never accomplish in fair fight. With this intent he led the way, as though he would guide her faithfully to the enchanted castle; and Bradamante pressed on eagerly behind him, for she never suspected that he was one of the enemies of her race, and felt nothing but pity for his misfortunes and impatience to deliver her lover. Thus they rode together down the valley and through a great forest, and came to the foot of a mountain, which they set themselves to cross; but as they were winding up its side, Pinabel turned to his companion and said: "At the top of this mountain there is a deep pit which leads into a dark cave beneath the ground; and when I passed by the place two days ago I saw a beautiful damsel sitting at the bottom of the pit, and weeping as though her heart would break for sorrow. And even as I looked, a villainous-looking ruffian came out of

the cave and rudely dragged her in with him by the wrist, though with sobs and tears she implored him to have mercy on her and release her from her imprisonment." Now Bradamante was ever ready to give help to those who needed it, so she answered that it were a shame to pass so near the place without attempting to deliver the damsel, and that there was just time enough to accomplish the enterprise before the setting of the sun. So they rode to the mouth of the pit, where Bradamante drew her sword and lopped off a great bough from an oak that grew hard by, and giving it to Pinabel, said: "Keep firm hold of the end of this pole, and I will lower myself down by it into the pit." So Pinabel grasped the end of the bough in both hands and lowered it into the pit, while the noble Bradamante sheathed her sword and began scrambling down this shaky ladder without ever trying to find out how nearly it reached the bottom. But she had not got half way down its length when the false Pinabel suddenly let it slip from his hands, and cried with a diabolical laugh: "Would that all thy hateful race were with thee on this pole, that I might destroy them in an instant." And thereupon he mounted his horse and rode upon his way rejoicing in the success of his dastardly treason; for I need hardly tell you that his story of the distressed damsel was a sheer invention of his own to lure Bradamante to her destruction; and he little thought that his treachery would be the means of giving her the victory over the enchanter, or that it would lead to his own death.

The pit was very deep, and was bored out of the solid rock; but happily for Bradamante her fall was broken by the great bough to which she clung, and this saved her from being dashed to pieces as Pinabel had expected, though so rude was her fall that for more than an hour she lay stunned upon the rocky floor. But when she recovered her senses she found that in one respect Pinabel had spoken more truly than he knew or intended; for there was really a door in the wall of the pit, which seemed to lead into the bowels of the earth. She passed through it, and found herself in a cavern hollowed out of the hard rock, so vast that it might

have served for the den of a race of giants; but the form in which it was built suggested rather the appearance of a solemn cathedral: great columns of the purest alabaster rose from floor to roof and divided it into nave and aisles, and the whole grotto was lighted by a single lamp of wonderful brightness, which hung before an altar in the distant apse. While Bradamante gazed in wonder around her, a beautiful lady, clad in robes of purple samite, and with her black hair bound by a chain of golden bees, came from before the altar, and said: "Welcome, noble Bradamante, and know that it is no mere chance that brings you hither. For this is the grotto which Merlin the Wise commanded the spirits of the earth to fashion for him, and hither his body was brought when false Vivian had laid him in a trance for ever. Now, therefore, his body lies motionless in the tomb which I will show you, but his spirit is alive within him, and prophesies of the future to all who seek his counsel. And when I came many days ago to consult him, he told me that you would follow me hither to-day, and bade me stay to show you the high fortunes that await you. Come with me therefore to the tomb and hear what his voice will say to you, and afterwards I will teach you all things needful for your fame and happiness. For I am the enchantress Melissa, the friend of you and all your house, and Merlin has appointed me to guard your destinies and bring to naught the counsels of your enemies." With these words Melissa led the astonished Bradamante to the apse at the end of the grotto, and opening another door in the wall disclosed a vaulted chapel, in the centre of which stood the sepulchre of Merlin the Wise. The walls of this chapel were lined with transparent marble, which shed a soft rosy light through all the place; but the tomb was a great sarcophagus of unblemished crystal, and in it the body of the mighty wizard had lain entranced for a hundred years, so that his white beard was grown down to his knees; but the blood had not left his lips, nor the colour faded from his cheeks. And there he must lie till the end of the world, for there is no remedy to break the spell which binds him in this trance.



THE MAGIC PROCESSION.—P. 7.

Now as Bradamante entered by the door the voice of Merlin issued from the midst of the crystal sepulchre, and said:

"Hail! warrior-maid of Clairmont's line;
A glorious destiny is thine,
And naught avails man's enmity
To balk the Fates of their decree.
The traitor seeks thy life in vain,
Whose treason works his victim's gain;
In vain the enchanter's craft is plied
To tear thee from thy bridegroom's side;
All blissful joy shall crown thy life;
The Fates appoint thee Roger's wife;
Fame and success thy steps betide!
Thus Merlin's soul greets Roger's bride."

Then a great silence fell upon the chapel, and the noble damsel was like to faint for joy; but kind Melissa took her by the hand and led her back into the spacious grotto, where she set food and wine before her, and bade her eat and drink and recover her strength, and afterwards she should hear all that Merlin had commissioned the enchantress to tell her.

As soon as they had refreshed themselves with the supper, Melissa said: "First I will show you the likenesses of all the great warriors and wise statesmen and of all the gracious ladies who shall descend from your union with Prince Roger; for you have heard from the lips of Merlin that you are destined to be his bride, and it is fated that you should found one of the mightiest families in the world." And with these words the enchantress drew a magic circle in the centre of the grotto, and inside the circle she traced the lines of a pentacle, in which she bade Bradamante take her stand. I suppose you know what a pentacle is just as well as I do, so I am not going to tell you anything about it here; for you have only got to read your *Ingoldsby Legends* and you will find out how it is made and all about it, and will give yourself the treat of a good hearty fit of laughing into the bargain. Well, then, Bradamante placed herself within the pentacle, and Melissa took a wand in her right hand and a book of magic in her left, and began reading the spells by which she controlled the spirits to her

purpose. And as she read, a great multitude of spirits passed one by one before their eyes wearing the likeness of Bradamante's future descendants; some were armed from head to foot in shining mail, others wore crowns upon their heads and bore the princely sceptre in their hands, while some appeared in the guise of smooth-cheeked lads in slashed doublets and bright parti-coloured hose, such as you may still see in the old Italian pictures whenever you have the luck to get a sight of them. Numbers of ladies, too, defiled before them: grave matrons with silvern hair and slow majestic gait, proud princesses in jewelled coronets and magnificent brocaded gowns, and merry maidens with nut-brown hair and laughing gray eyes, whose sunny smiles seemed to gladden all the grotto. And as the spirits passed by Melissa told Bradamante whom they represented and what would be each one's destiny in the world; and greatly did the noble damsel rejoice to think that she should be the mother of so princely a race.

Three full hours she spent in watching this brilliant procession; but when they were all gone by the kind enchantress said: "Now we will take our rest for the night; and in the morning I will tell you everything that you must do to deliver Prince Roger out of the enchanted castle, and I will go with you as far as I can upon your journey." So she prepared a bed for Bradamante and another for herself, whereon they both slept soundly till the following sunrise.

CHAPTER II.

HOW BRADAMANTE DEFEATED THE ENCHANTER ATLAS AND FREED HER LOVER.

At sunrise the two noble ladies set out together on their journey, which they were forced to perform on foot, for the traitor Pinabel had made off with Bradamante's charger. But even if they had had a horse, he would have been more a hindrance than a help to them, for the path was dark and difficult, and led them into a thickly wooded ravine shut in by almost impassable precipices, so that they had to spend the whole day in scrambling down the face of rugged cliffs, and crossing the rocky beds of foaming torrents. But Melissa relieved the troubles of the journey by wise and pleasant discourse, and especially she told her companion how she was to set about the deliverance of her lover. "Everything," she said, "which Pinabel told you about the enchanter is true to the letter; for the castle walls are really of solid steel, and its position is so strong that even although you were as powerful as Charlemagne and King Agramant put together, and had both their armies at your orders, you could never take it by assault. The winged monster too, upon which the magician rides, is swifter in flight than an eagle; and besides all this, the bright shield is so cunningly enchanted that every one who beholds it is struck helpless and swooning to the ground. But though force will not help you, I will tell you how you may defeat your enemy by spells that are stronger than his own. There is a magic ring which if you wear it on your finger will keep you unharmed amid all enchantments,

while if you put it into your mouth you will immediately become invisible. This precious ring once belonged to the beautiful Princess Angelica, the beloved of Count Roland; but while she was yet in her Indian kingdom it was stolen from her by the rascally thief Brunello, who took it with him into Africa and sold it for a great price to King Agramant. And Agramant is now sending the thief to deliver Prince Roger by its aid; for he values the Courteous Prince above all the other knights in his army. But Roger must owe his deliverance to you alone, and not to such a scoundrel as Brunello; and therefore you must get possession of the ring, and this is how you must manage it. To-night I will leave you at a little inn on the shore of the Bay of Biscay, where you must wait patiently for two days. On the third day Brunello will come to the place, and you will easily recognise him; for he is a hideous dwarf, less than five feet high, with a skin as brown as walnut-juice and a crop of frizzled black hair on his misshapen head; his eyes are swollen and bleared, his nose flat and crooked, and his eyebrows so thick and shaggy that you would think his beard had grown there by mistake. Now you must ask him to be your guide, and tell him that you are burning with eagerness to fight against the enchanter; but say nothing of Prince Roger, or he will certainly give you the slip. And when you come in sight of the castle turn suddenly upon him and cut off his head with your sword: and don't pity or spare him, for if he had received half his deserts he would have swung upon the gallows long ago. In this way you will get possession of the magic ring, and will be proof against all the enchantments of the magician; but if you try any other means of attacking him, you will certainly fail, for without the ring nobody can withstand the power of his spells."

Bradamante thanked the kind enchantress for her instructions, which she promised to remember and follow faithfully; and immediately afterwards they found themselves on the sea-shore, and close to the little inn at which Melissa was to part from her companion. There everything happened as she had foretold: Bradamante waited for two

days without seeing any stranger approach the place, but she bought a fine black Spanish jennet which the landlord happened to have for sale in his stables, and amused herself by trying his paces and tilting at the ring in the yard. On the third morning the notorious thief Brunello came to the inn and called for breakfast; and Bradamante knew him at once from Melissa's description, and thought: "This must certainly be my scoundrel, for the world could not hold two such monsters at a time." He was dressed in the tight leather jerkin and breeches of a courier, which showed off all the deformities of his hideous limbs at their worst; his wicked-looking face was so disgustingly ugly that you could hardly believe him to be a human being; and his bony hands played restlessly about, as if they itched to steal whatever his bleared eyes lighted on. Bradamante saw with joy that on one of his fingers he carried the magic ring, which was a broad hoop of solid gold with a turquoise as big and as blue as a hedge-sparrow's egg in the centre; and she lost no time in coming to speech with him, and asking him if he could show her the way to the castle of steel. "For," she said, "I have heard much of the crimes of the robber who dwells there, and how he afflicts all the land by carrying off noble knights and beautiful ladies to his fortress; and I have vowed not to put off the helmet from my head nor unbuckle the sword from my side till I have come to an encounter with him, and tried to rid the world of such a plague. But the people here dare not show me the way to his castle, and so great is their terror that they pretend not to know where it lies; so that, if you know these mountains, and will guide me on my way, you will do a great service to me and all the world."

Now to Brunello this proposal seemed a rare piece of luck; for he thought, "If only this big fellow sets to whacking the enchanter, I shall find it all the easier to slip into the castle and do my errand." So he put on a hideous grin, which was his way of smiling pleasantly, and answered: "True it is, Sir Knight, that I know every mountain and valley of the Pyrenees as well as a farmer knows his own fields and hedges; and as I have a little spare

time on my hands I will gladly show you the way to the enchanter's castle;" but he said nothing about the magic ring, and you may be sure Bradamante was very careful not to let a word drop about Prince Roger.

Brunello was still busy over his breakfast, and the greedy little scamp gobbled down half a dozen mutton-chops and three plates full of eggs and bacon before he was ready to start; but at last he got into his saddle and led the way towards the mountains. Bradamante followed just behind him, and took care not to come too close, for, she thought, "If I don't keep my distance, those cunning hands of his will be stealing the horse from under me;" and in this she showed her sense, for nothing was safe that came within reach of Brunello's fingers; and in fact he was the very master-thief to whom the light-fingered fellow in Grimm's Stories bound himself apprentice. They rode a long way over the windy passes, and from height to height of the great chain of the Pyrenees, till they mounted to the topmost ridge, from which they could see the Bay of Biscay heaving with the great Atlantic swell on their right, and the blue Mediterranean glittering in the sunlight to their left. Thence they followed a rugged track which led them down the southern side of the mountain range and brought them at length to the desolate valley, in the midst of which rose the steep mass of rock crowned with its enchanted castle of shining steel. Then Bradamante thought it was high time to get possession of the magic ring; so she leaped upon Brunello as a cat leaps upon a mouse, and before he had time to think of what was happening to him, she had dragged him from his saddle, and tied his hands tight behind his back with a piece of whipcord. But the generous damsel would not draw her sword, as Melissa had bidden her, against an unarmed man; and even though she knew the hideous little dwarf to be the most thorough-paced scoundrel unhung, still she took shame to slay him when she saw him lie bound and helpless at her feet. In this only did she disobey the instructions of Melissa, and I am happy to say her generosity brought her no harm; though the world would certainly have been grateful to her

for making an end of so pestilent a rascal. However, she dared not leave him at liberty, or he would assuredly have revenged himself for the assault by working the ruin of her enterprise; so she bound him securely to a great tree that grew by the side of the path, and there left him to shriek himself hoarse with abuse of her. But first she took the precious ring which he wore and put it on her own finger, and with it went on confidently towards the castle.

The four sides of the crag went sheer down from top to bottom; but in one of them the enchanter had cut a pathway so narrow that only one person could ride along it at a time, and so steep that it needed a strong and sure-footed horse to clamber up it. With great difficulty Bradamante got her jennet to make the ascent; and she no sooner came to the level platform at the top than she seized the horn which hung by the castle gate and blew a blast which made the bright walls ring and quiver with its echo. Her challenge was answered from within the castle, and immediately afterwards Bradamante saw her enemy shoot up into the air and wheel in great circles above her head. The winged monster upon which he rode was called the Hippogrif, and was the only beast of its kind that ever was seen; for its head and neck were those of a griffin, and so were its fore-legs and feet, which were furnished with great claws three inches long and as hard as the curved instrument at the back of your knife for pulling a stone out of a horse's foot. But in its hind-legs and all its body it was like a horse; only from the shoulders grew a pair of enormous wings, with feathers shaped like an eagle's, and radiant with all the seven colours of the rainbow. The robber himself was armed from head to foot in shining steel, and carried a lance in his right hand, while the wonderful shield was encased in a cover of purple silk and strapped to his left arm; but in his left hand he held an open book, from which he read out spells and incantations, while he guided the flight of the Hippogrif simply by the pressure of his knees.

And now Bradamante became aware of the extraordinary fact that this enchanter never really came near the knights

with whom he fought; but the spells which he kept reading from his book made them believe that he was rushing at them through the air and dealing them sound knocks with his lance, while really he was soaring well out of reach above their heads and laughing in his sleeve at the trouble they took for nothing. This time, however, he had little reason to laugh; for with the magic ring upon her finger Bradamante saw through all his tricks and met them by superior cunning. She did not choose that he should find out too soon that she possessed a talisman against his spells, so she thrust away at the empty air with her lance, as though she saw an enemy before her, and kept raising and lowering her shield as if to parry the blows which he seemed to deal her. For more than an hour they kept up this game of sham fighting, and both of them thought it capital fun; though the magician little dreamed where the point of the joke really lay. But at last he began to think that his fooling had gone far enough, and that it was time to get to business, so he wheeled up right in front of Bradamante, and ripping off the silken cover from the shield flashed its brilliant surface in her eyes. Of course the noble damsel was not a bit dazzled at the sight, but she was not so simple as to show her game to the enemy till she had got him well within her grasp; so she tumbled off her horse as if she had been shot, and lay motionless and to all appearance senseless on the ground.

Then with a laugh of triumph the enchanter put back the shield into its case, which he slung across his saddlebow, and bringing the Hippogrif with a swoop to the earth, he leaped off its back and unwound an iron chain from his waist; for whenever he went out to fight he carried this chain in readiness to bind the knights whom the sight of his shield laid swooning at his feet. Grasping its links in both hands he bent over the prostrate maiden; but this was just the opportunity for which Bradamante had been waiting, and springing up she seized the astonished magician in her arms, and threw him down without a struggle upon the ground. Then she bound him firmly with his own chain,

and unlaced his helmet to slay him; but what was her surprise when the helmet fell off and displayed no savage ruffian as she expected, but the wrinkled face and white hair of a decrepit old man, who looked nearly eighty years old! Thereat Bradamante put back her sword into its sheath, and gazed in speechless wonder at her captive, who cried, with the tears in his eyes: "Slay me, slay me, Sir Knight, I entreat you; for you have broken my power, and life is become hateful to me." But the generous damsel answered: "Nay, for I have never slain a boy or an old man, and never will I be guilty of so vile a deed. But neither will I release you from your chains till you have demolished this enchanted castle and set at liberty all the knights and ladies whom you hold in shameful captivity." At this the old man uttered a cry of anguish and exclaimed: "Noble Sir Knight, have pity on me, and ask of me any other service than this. In all else I am ready to obey you; and willingly will I set free all the ladies in the castle, and all the gallant knights save one alone. But suffer me to keep my fortress and to guard from danger the courteous Prince Roger, for love of whom I have committed all this fault. For I am the enchanter Atlas, who took him as an orphan babe from his dead mother's breast, after she had followed the king his father to the grave. All through his boyhood I tended him as though he were my own son, and when he grew to man's estate and approved himself the bravest knight in Africa, my heart rejoiced in his prowess and renown. But alas! the stars have lately foretold to me that he must die by treachery in a Christian land; and when I knew that, I immediately built this castle, into which I entrapped him for his safety; and all the other knights and ladies I brought hither that he might spend his life joyously in worthy company. Suffer me therefore, generous Sir Knight, to keep him under my protection; or else kill me without delay, for I would rather die than see him fall into the calamities which await him." But Bradamante answered him scornfully: "Methinks you must be ill able to foretell the destinies of others, who have proved so poor a prophet of your own. Know that high and glorious

fortunes await this Prince Roger whom you love, and you play the part of a bad friend to him in keeping him secluded from the field of battle and fame. Wherefore I command you to destroy the walls of this castle, with the rock on which it stands; for till you have done this I will not release you from your captivity."

Poor Atlas was not at all convinced by her assurances, but he saw that he was in her power and could not resist her will; so with a heavy heart he promised to do as she commanded him. Then she loosed the chain from his arms, but kept it still fastened round his body, and held the end of it in her hand, for fear he should attempt to give her the slip; and Atlas went to the gate of the castle and lifted up a heavy slab of marble, under which a square hole about the size of a large oven was disclosed in the foundation of hard rock. From this hole he took out a long roll of parchment, covered with written spells and all manner of cabalistic signs and figures, which he tore into a thousand pieces and scattered to the four winds. A second and yet a third roll he destroyed in the same way, but still the castle of steel remained unskaken; and Bradamante would have thought he was trying to play her a trick, if the ring had not told her that these parchment scrolls really contained the spells by which the spirits of the air had been constrained to build and maintain the fortress. But there was still a spirit imprisoned in the hole, and till he was released the castle would remain as strong and impregnable as ever. So when Atlas had torn up the three parchments and scattered abroad their fragments, he stooped down again over the hole and drew up a half-gallon stone bottle sealed at the mouth with yellow sealing-wax, on which was stamped the impression of Virgil's magic signet-ring. With a deep sigh the poor old man broke the seal and drew out the cork from beneath it, when a thick column of white vapour issued from the opening and took the form of a beautiful youth, with wings sprouting from his heels and the winged cap of Mercury on his head, who flew up into the air and was lost to sight beyond the neighbouring mountains. Immediately the enchanted castle and the rock on which it

stood were dissolved in a dense cloud of blue smoke; and when the smoke cleared away, Bradamante found that the old magician too had disappeared, and she was left standing in the middle of the valley with the knights and ladies whom she had delivered.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ROGER WAS CARRIED AWAY ON THE HIPPOGRIF AND CAME TO THE FORTUNATE ISLANDS.

To tell the honest truth, more than half of the delivered knights and ladies were but ill pleased at the destruction of the enchanted castle, and heartily wished that Bradamante had succumbed, like all who came before her, to the power of the magician. For although Atlas intended to keep them in perpetual captivity, yet he had brought them thither, as he confessed to Bradamante, solely to make pleasant company for Roger in a life of ease and delight. And for this end he had provided them with a ceaseless round of tournaments by day and revelry by night, with sumptuous banquets spread with every dainty which the whole earth could furnish, and luxuries undreamt of by the most magnificent of princes. Thus it happened that the slothful and pleasure-loving men among them were thoroughly vexed at the interruption to their life of peace and dalliance, and rode sullenly away through the valley without giving so much as a bow to their deliverer; for there are many birds silly enough to think a little gilding on their cages better than the pure gold of the free sunshine. But the nobler and wiser among the knights had long since schooled themselves

> "To know that rest is nowise bliss,
> And darkness is the end thereof,"

as Mr. Lang sings in a poem which I hope you will read before you are very many years older. These rejoiced beyond measure at recovering their liberty, and crowded

round Bradamante to thank her for the service she had rendered them. And when the noble damsel took off her helmet, and they saw the beautiful brown hair fall in masses to her waist and proclaim her a gentle lady, their gratitude was mingled with wonder, and they paid no less homage to her beauty than they felt admiration for her valour and generosity.

Foremost of this gallant company was King Gradasso, who had led a mighty host from China into Europe in hope of winning back the sword Durindana from the hands of Roland, and who had been captured together with Prince Roger by the cunning Atlas, as Pinabel had narrated to Bradamante. With kingly courtesy he saluted the noble damsel, and thanked her for restoring him to the liberty which he valued more than life; and then took his leave of her with a stately reverence, and rode off in haste to join his soldiers in the Saracen army. After him came Sacripant, King of Circassia, who also had come to France to fight as the ally of King Agramant; and he was followed by the Christian Knights Prasild and Irold, a pair of valiant friends who had followed the fiery Raynald from the islands of Greece, and now rejoiced to owe their freedom to their gallant comrade's sister.

But the courteous Prince Roger, who exulted more than any of them in the success of Bradamante, came last of all; for he would not that any stranger's eye should witness his meeting with his lady. Imagine if you can the joy with which these noble lovers greeted each other, and how hour after hour passed away like a few short minutes and left them still deep in their conversation. For Bradamante had to tell Roger of all that had befallen her in her search for him; how Pinabel had treacherously sought to slay her; how Merlin had foretold their marriage, and how kind Melissa had shown her all the images of their future descendants: she told him, too, all about the thief Brunello, and the magic ring which was once Angelica's, and of the old enchanter's distress at being obliged to destroy his castle of steel. And Roger told her how Atlas had been as a father to him ever since he could remember, but that lately

he had tried to keep him from the warfare to which honour summoned him. And this was a thing, he said, in which he could not yield, even to the wishes of his foster-father, though in all else he willingly submitted himself to his authority.

Presently Bradamante said: "Look! there is the old man's Hippogrif still standing quietly by us. I have a mind to catch him and take a ride on him, for he is mine by right of conquest since I have overcome his master." So she went towards the winged steed and stretched out her hand to take him by the bridle; but the Hippogrif darted up into the air, and flew a hundred yards or so away before he settled again upon the ground. Again and again she tried to catch him, but he always flew off before she could touch him, and then came down to earth a little distance away, where he waited for her to get near him again, just as you may see a butterfly flit from one cabbage-row to another, and always manage to keep a yard or two ahead of the boy who chases it. At last, however, he alighted close by the side of Roger, whereupon the Prince cried to his lady: "I will catch him and give him a ride to break him in for you;" and, seizing hold of the bridle in his left hand, he vaulted on to the back of the Hippogrif, who stood still without attempting to escape, as if to acknowledge that here he had found his proper master. But the Prince was no sooner fairly in the saddle than his strange mount shot up fifty feet straight into the air, and, taking the bit between his teeth, with a dozen flaps of his mighty wings carried his unwilling rider far away over the mountains and out of sight of the unfortunate Bradamante.

You must know that though Roger was quite unable to hold his Hippogrif, and soon gave up the attempt in despair, the winged monster was really guided by something stronger than bit or bridle, and every motion of his headlong flight was controlled by the will of an invisible master. The whole affair, in fact, was the work of the enchanter Atlas, who was still persuaded that great dangers awaited his beloved Prince in the land of France, and determined to

use all his cunning to remove him to a place of safety. With this design he had watched the noble lovers from his hiding-place, and guided every movement of the Hippogrif by the mere muttering of spells; and by the same means he still steered the creature's course through the air, for he was so powerful an enchanter that he could make his purpose take effect from one end of the earth to the other.

Roger had a firm seat and a heart that knew no fear, and at any other time would have enjoyed nothing better than such an exciting adventure; but now he was terribly vexed at being separated again from his beloved Bradamante, and at being carried away from the land where Agramant his King and the Emperor Charlemagne were mustering all their forces for the great struggle. However, there was no help for it, for the Hippogrif flew through the air at such a pace that he soon left the realms of Europe far behind him, and after a flight of a few hours he had carried the Prince half round the globe, and found himself hovering over the Fortunate Islands, which lie in the far Eastern seas beyond the shores of India. Here he checked his course, and descended in wide circles to the earth, and at length alighted on the largest and most beautiful island of all the group. Green meadows and rich fields were watered by clear streams; and lovely groves of palm and myrtle, cedar and banyan, spread their thick shade over the gentle slopes of hill, and offered a refuge from the heat of the mid-day sun. Birds of paradise flashed like jewels in the blazing light, and modest brown nightingales sang their sweet refrain to the conceited parrots, who sat admiring themselves among the branches; while under the trees hares and rabbits frisked merrily about, and stately stags led their graceful does to drink at the river banks. Upon this fertile tract, which stretched down to the very brink of the sea, the Hippogrif descended; and his feet no sooner touched the ground than Prince Roger leaped from his back, and made fast his bridle to the stem of a spreading myrtle-bush. Then he took off his helmet and cuirass, and went to bathe his face and hands in the cool waters of the brook; for his pulses were throbbing from his swift ride

through ten thousand miles of air, and his veins burned as though the blood within them were turned to liquid fire.

But while the Prince was splashing the refreshing water over his aching head, a sulphur-crested cockatoo settled in the branches of the myrtle to which the Hippogrif was tied, and gave vent to one of those unearthly screams of which cockatoos and parrots keep the secret. This hideous noise so startled the Hippogrif, that he made a great bound into the air; and if his bridle had been a little less firmly tied, he would certainly have broken loose and soared away goodness knows whither in his terror. Up jumped Roger when he heard the commotion, and ran to make sure that the knot was strong enough to hold the struggling beast; and he found the myrtle so shaken and torn by his frantic efforts, that half its leaves and twigs lay strewn upon the grass beneath. So he set himself to fasten the knot more tightly round the stem; but only fancy his astonishment when a lamentable voice, as of a man in an agony of suffering, issued from the midst of the bush, and said: "Ah! Sir Knight, if you have any pity take away your beast from my trunk, for his struggles are tearing me into a thousand pieces." The Prince was so astounded that he stood stock still, and could not find a word to answer; but the myrtle continued: "Know that I was once the English Duke Astulf, a Paladin of France, and a knight of no little renown in the world; and my comrades called me the Jovial, because I was light of heart, and delighted in good-fellowship and mirth. But now I am the unhappiest wretch upon earth; and I have been brought to this misery by the magic of the bad fairy Alcina, who is Queen of this beautiful country, and the wickedest fairy in all the world. For whenever a stranger knight comes to her kingdom, she receives him with joyful welcome, and entertains him for a year and a day with such delights as pass the mind of man to imagine. She makes him forget the toils and troubles of his life, and drowns all memory of the past and all care for the future in a ceaseless round of pastime and gaiety. But when a year and a day are past, she tires of his company, and brings him hither to the

shore of the island, where she changes him into the shape of a tree, and so leaves him to bewail his folly in having listened to her treacherous blandishments. This is what has happened to me and many others, and the same fate will surely be yours; for there is no man so wise and constant of soul as to resist the fascinations of her beauty and her witchcraft."

Great was Roger's grief at hearing the myrtle's woful story; for he lamented that a valiant knight should be brought to such a pass, and he knew besides that Duke Astulf was cousin to his lady Bradamante. He was no magician himself, and could do nothing to help him; but he resolved that whenever he saw his foster-father again, he would beg him to use his arts for the release of the hapless Paladin. Meanwhile he asked if there was no way of escape from the kingdom of this wicked fairy; and the myrtle answered him: "The end of this island is ruled by Alcina's sister, the fairy Logistilla; and if you can flee to her domains you will be safe, for she is as wise and good as her sister is base and treacherous. Her court is still more splendid than Alcina's, for she delights in sober and stately magnificence; she has taken Justice for her counsellor and Virtue for her handmaid; and instead of persuading to sloth and dalliance, she trains her knights to be watchful and diligent in arms, and constant in all practices of chivalrous self-denial. Her ladies, too, are prudent and decorous dames, whose applause is given to deeds of valour and loyalty; and throughout her realm every man is esteemed according to his worth, so that the wise and noble of heart bear rule, and the baser sort are kept in subjection under them. But her kingdom is separated from this by a deep bay and a steep and narrow mountain; and the path across this isthmus is guarded by a tribe of savages, whom Alcina stations there to bar the passage against all who wish to seek the good fairy's protection. These savages are so fierce and so many in number that Roland himself could scarce hope to force the passage; but perhaps your winged beast may carry you safely over their heads." "Alas!" answered Roger, "the

Hippogrif is of no use to me, for I can neither hold nor steer him, and he has already brought me many thousand miles against my will. But I will essay the mountain-path; for I would rather be torn in pieces by the savages than submit myself to the wiles of the wicked Alcina."

So he threw the Hippogrif's bridle over his arm, for he would not trust himself again on the creature's back, and set out to walk towards the mountain. He reached the foot of it in a couple of hours, and began ascending the zigzag path that led across it; but he had not mounted a quarter of the height when he was assailed by the whole horde of wild men, and had much ado to defend his life against them. They were a hideous race of giants, with long arms and copper-coloured skins covered with bristly black hair; and you would have wondered whether they were apes or men, till you heard them screaming to each other with human speech. They wore no armour, but their hides were so tough that no common weapon could pierce them, and even Roger, with his wonderful sword Balisarda, which could cut through an iron buckler as easily as a knife cuts butter, found that all the strength of his arm was needed to draw the blood from their veins. He laid about him with a will, however, and managed to kill the first dozen who came within his reach; but he was sadly hampered by having to keep hold of the Hippogrif's bridle, while a constantly increasing number of the savages pressed on from behind their slaughtered companions, and maintained the fight against him with unabated fierceness. Already he had suffered many a stunning blow from the knotted clubs which they carried, and it seemed as if in spite of his gallantry he must soon be overborne by the sheer weight of their numbers.

But the chief city of Alcina's kingdom lay at no great distance in the valley below, and the watchman there had seen what was going on, and cried that a knight of goodly aspect was fighting against the wild men on the mountain path. Forthwith a pair of damsels belonging to the wicked fairy's court set out to see if they could not persuade this gallant warrior to leave the hideous savages

ALCINA'S DAMSELS. —P. 25.

alone, and return with them to the palace of their queen. Mounted on white unicorns, with their green robes of the finest gauze fluttering behind them in the breeze, and their yellow hair bound by chains of brilliant emeralds, they set out from the city gate, and rode in haste towards the border mountain. And as soon as they came there, they called to the savages to cease from the combat, and then turning to the valiant Prince, said in voices softer than the rippling brook: "Sir Knight, of what avail is it to seek toil and danger, when ease and pleasure stand ready at your call? Leave these ferocious savages, who will certainly kill you if you continue to fight against them, and turn with us to the joyous court, wherein there is neither grief of spirit nor peril of life, but all the day is spent in peaceful delights, and the night is gay with feast and dance and mirthful frolic. Turn with us, I say, and refuse not our request; for it is discourteous in a knight to deny a maiden's prayer, when she asks him to bear her company."

Now Roger might have answered that he preferred a life of peril and fame to all the soft delights of inglorious ease; but he could not resist an appeal to his courtesy, and he said to himself: "Certainly these beauteous creatures mean me nothing but good; and I were unworthy to bear the golden spurs of knighthood if I refused so gracious an entreaty." So he answered the damsels: "Fair and gentle ladies, I am your servant to dispose of as you will, and I hold him no better than a churl who could hold back in any wise from performing your behests." And thereupon he turned his back upon the rough mountain that led through toil and danger to the kingdom of Logistilla, and took his way with these beautiful companions towards the pleasant city of Alcina.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ROGER LIVED IN THE GARDENS OF ALCINA AND HOW HE ESCAPED FROM HER.

You may be surprised, perhaps, that Roger had not thought of stripping off the cover from his wonderful shield when he was so hard pressed by the horde of savages. For when the Hippogrif carried him off from the valley of the Pyrenees the shield still hung from the pommel of his saddle where it had been left by the old enchanter, and Roger actually made use of it to defend himself from the clubs of his wild assailants. And if he had only ripped off the case of silk that covered its dazzling surface he would in a moment have found his way clear over the mountain into Logistilla's kingdom. The fact was, I suppose, that he would not owe a victory to the force of enchantment as long as he had the least hope of winning it by his own valour, for in the point of honour Roger was the most punctilious man alive. Some people say, however, that he forgot all about the magic properties of the shield; but I don't think that is at all likely. At all events the damsels from Alcina's court came upon the scene before things had got to such a pass as to compel him to use this last resource; and their appeal to his courtesy persuaded him, as you have already heard, to turn back with them to the joyous court. So they rode on their white unicorns towards the city, and Prince Roger walked between them with the Hippogrif's bridle over his arm. As they approached the town, the Prince was almost struck blind by its splendour, which surpassed anything

that he had ever seen or heard of. For it was encircled by a battlemented wall of pure white marble, from which sprang lofty towers of red porphyry; and all the houses, both small and great, were likewise built of white marble, with lintels and window-jambs of ebony, and overhanging roofs of solid silver. But the most wonderful sight of all was the city gate, which consisted of two great folding doors of beaten gold, decorated in every panel with beautiful sculpture; while the frieze above the gateway was a broad band of gold graven in quaint patterns and studded all over with priceless gems, and was supported on four tall columns each cut out of a single enormous diamond. Through this beautiful gate Roger entered the city with his companions; and here they mounted him on a magnificent bay charger decked with gorgeous trappings, while the Hippogrif was handed over to a groom, who was ordered to lead him after them.

The palace and gardens of Alcina were not in the town but on the side of a hill beyond it, and to reach them it was necessary to cross a broad and rapid river which ran beneath the city walls. As they drew near to the bridge, the damsels turned to Roger and said: "Sir Knight, we have seen proof of your valour in arms, and for once we must ask you to display it in our service. For the bridge across this river is guarded by a terrible giantess, named Erifilla, who is the one plague of our country, for she opposes the passage of all who seek to mount from the city to the palace of our Queen. But we doubt not that you will prevail against her; and when she is overthrown the way is clear to the pleasant gardens where there is no more toil or strife, but all is merriment and pleasure, with ease of body and mind." "Right willingly, fair ladies," answered the Courteous Prince, "will I essay this adventure in your service; nay, if there were a hundred giantesses, and every giantess had with her a hundred giants, I would do battle with all the tribe of them at your command."

Thereupon he laid his lance in rest and pushed forward to the bridge, and the giantess Erifilla lost no time in

coming against him to dispute the passage. She must have been the biggest woman that ever was seen, for she was fully eight feet high; and instead of a horse she rode upon an enormous wolf, which was as big and heavy as a Hereford bull, but as swift of foot as the fleetest mare in Arabia. How she guided this strange charger I don't know, for she rode without bit or bridle; but in some way or other she had complete control over every movement of the beast. And now she launched him at full gallop against the Prince; but he was no less eager to come to blows, and spurred his bay charger with equal fury to the assault. They met with a shock that made the earth tremble beneath them, but the victory was not in doubt for a moment. For Erifilla's lance snapped short against Prince Roger's buckler, but his point struck her true and full beneath the chin, and bearing her fairly out of the saddle laid her huge body senseless on the ground. Down leaped the Prince from his horse, and drew his sword Balisarda to slay her; but the damsels that bore him company cried: "Hold, Sir Knight! hold! Bravely have you borne yourself, and the victory is fairly yours. But be satisfied with this conquest, and seek not to slay the giantess; for though her life is a plague to us, yet her death would bring far greater calamities upon all the land." Thereupon the knight thrust back Balisarda into the scabbard, and mounted again upon his horse, and so accompanied the damsels without further hindrance towards the gardens of Alcina.

The palace of this wicked fairy, built upon the hill-slope, was far more splendid even than the city which lay in the valley. Its walls were coated both outside and in with a layer of mother-of-pearl, and the windows were bordered by blocks of deep-blue lapis lazuli; it was roofed with tiles of pure gold laid upon beams and rafters of sweet-scented sandal-wood; and its doors were all of ivory fantastically inlaid with gold, with posts and lintels beautifully carved of the blackest ebony. Round the palace lay the pleasant gardens, with their golden-gravelled terraces and brilliant flower-beds breaking the soft slope of

fresh green lawn. They stretched over the whole surface of the hill, and in them were planted trees and shrubs of every kind upon earth, some to furnish luscious fruits in their season, and others to give shade from the heat and gladden the eye with their graceful shapes and various tints of foliage. As the little party wound up the side of the hill, one of the damsels unscrewed the horn from her unicorn's forehead, and putting it to her lips drew from it a few notes of delicious music. This was the signal to those in the palace that a stranger knight was coming to the place, and immediately Alcina herself issued from the door and came forward to meet her guest. She was dressed in a pink robe of the finest gauze sewn with priceless jewels; round her white neck and arms flashed a collar and bracelets of the most splendid diamonds, and her golden hair was bound by ropes of pearls worth a king's ransom. Her train of pink satin was borne by two beautiful boys in the garb of pages, and she was accompanied by a bevy of handsome youths and lovely damsels who formed her court. But by far the loveliest to look upon of all the company was the fairy herself; and as she held out her hand and bade Prince Roger welcome to her dwelling, he thought that his eyes had never lighted on so fair a sight, and said to himself: "Surely this beautiful creature must be the best and noblest of women, and not a word will I believe of what that evil-speaking myrtle said to me. Certainly the Queen must have punished him thus for some heinous fault, and it was spite that made him utter such slanders against her." For you must know that Alcina was a very powerful fairy; and so strong was her magic that whoever beheld her straightway forgot all wisdom and looked upon his past life as a barren dream, desiring only to remain thenceforward for ever in her presence and spend his days in doing whatever she might command him. So you must not be too hard upon poor Prince Roger, nor hold him very much to blame for his folly, seeing that there was never a man in the world wise enough to resist of his own strength her magic fascinations. Naturally he was only too glad to follow her into the palace, and there

she received him with such festivities as are never dreamt of in these humdrum days.

For she bade her people set about preparing a magnificent banquet for the evening, which I shall not attempt to describe for fear of making your mouth water till the middle of next week. At this banquet Prince Roger sat at her right hand; and when it was finished, the whole joyous company went out and had strawberry ices on the lawn, and amused themselves with strolling about in the moonlight or telling each other's fortunes by the stars, which gave rise to infinite merriment. But when they had had enough of this they went in again to the palace, where they diverted themselves with music and dancing till it was high time to think about going to bed. The next morning they all rode a-hawking in the glorious forest that lay beyond the gardens, and in the evening they took their pleasure as before, so that day and night were spent in perpetual diversion and gaiety. And all the while Alcina kept Roger at her side and seemed as though she could never have enough of his company, while the infatuated Prince was miserable if he found himself for a moment apart from her. Now we must leave him there for a while amid his pitiful pleasures, and see what had become of the noble lady whom Alcina's magic had driven out of his thoughts.

Bradamante was at first nearly wild with grief and despair when she saw her lover carried off from her sight upon the Hippogrif; but she resolved to find him again if she had to go to the world's end in search of him. First, however, she remembered how the people of her government stood in need of her help, and rode in haste to her county of Provence, by which she killed two birds with one stone, as the saying goes. For all day she helped her subjects to fight against the Saracens who had overrun the country; but at night she made herself invisible by putting the magic ring into her mouth, and so wandered unperceived through the enemy's camp and up and down the quarters of the Saracen chiefs, trying if she could not hear tidings of her beloved Prince. Often she heard them make

mention of his name, and lament his absence from the army, but she got no hint of his whereabouts, for they knew less of the matter than the anxious listener herself. But a few days afterwards King Agramant ordered all his soldiers to quit Provence and hasten with him to besiege the Emperor in Paris; and the county was no sooner freed from its enemies than Bradamante resolved to go once more to the tomb of Merlin and seek the great wizard's counsel as to what she should do in her distress. So she set out for the mountain cavern, but she had not gone half a day's journey before she met the kind enchantress Melissa, who was at that very moment coming in search of her. To her Bradamante confided her troubles, and begged her to say if she knew where Roger was to be found; and Melissa comforted her and bade her be of good heart, for she said: "Stay quietly here, noble lady, in your government, for I know whither the Prince is gone, and I promise you he shall soon return to find you. But I myself must go and seek him, and you must give me the magic ring which you took from the thief Brunello, that I may be able to send him back to you. For the Hippogrif has carried him to the Fortunate Islands at the other end of the world, where he is now detained by the wicked fairy Alcina, and as her power is greater than mine I must have the ring for a remedy against her enchantments. Without it I cannot prevail against her in anything, but if you will give it into my keeping for a time I will soon send back your Prince to gladden you with his company."

Gladly did Bradamante give the magic ring to Melissa, and no less willingly would she have given her heart and her very life, if such a gift could have been of any use to her beloved Roger. Then Melissa called up the north-west wind by a powerful spell, and bade him take the shape of a coal-black palfrey; and when the wind had obeyed her orders, she mounted upon his back and rode him that very afternoon all the way from France to the Fortunate Islands. For when you have a Hippogrif or a wind to carry you, you don't lose much time in loitering by the way. As soon as she arrived in Alcina's island she dismissed her wind and

changed herself into the likeness of the old enchanter Atlas. Then she put the magic ring in her mouth, and after thus making herself invisible, went up to the wicked fairy's gardens and waited for an opportunity of finding Roger alone. That was not very easy, for Alcina hardly ever left his side; but at length she went for a moment into the palace to give some orders to her servants, and left Roger to wait for her return in the garden. Immediately Melissa took the ring out of her mouth, and presented herself to Roger in the semblance of the old enchanter. Alas! the Courteous Prince was sadly changed from the dauntless warrior who was so lately the pride and glory of King Agramant's army. In place of his coat of mail he wore a luxurious garment of soft silk, bracelets of gold encircled his once manly wrists, and his hair was wet with the costly perfumes of Arabia; in short, he looked as if all his life had been spent in ignoble foppery. With a severe frown the pretended Atlas approached the fallen knight and upbraided him with his forgetfulness of his own honour and Bradamante's love. And this Melissa could safely do, since the real Atlas was satisfied with having removed the Prince to a place of safety, where he meant to leave him for a time, thinking that he would easily find means to take him to some other retreat before the fatal year was out, and Alcina took it into her head to plant him by the side of the good Duke Astulf. With downcast eyes and a shame-stricken countenance Prince Roger listened to the bitter reproof of his supposed foster-father; and at last Melissa concluded: "Take now this ring and put it on your finger, and straightway you will see how your senses have been beguiled by Alcina's magic." Therewith she put the magic ring upon his hand, and Roger's eyes were opened to behold the truth and know the depth of his degradation, so that he longed to sink beneath the earth for shame and abhorrence of his foolishness. And at the same moment Melissa appeared to him in her own shape, and told him that she had taken the form of Atlas in order more easily to persuade him to his good, but the magic ring had now revealed her to him in her own person. Then she spoke to him of

Bradamante and her love for him, and bade him consider his folly in abandoning so noble a bride, till Roger begged her to stop, for he could not bear her just reproaches, and now loathed the false Alcina more than words could say. Lastly, the kind enchantress counselled him to be very prudent, and hide his change of purpose from Alcina till he had managed to get his good armour and sword again, but then to make the best of his way to the kingdom of Queen Logistilla; and Roger promised to do in everything as she advised him.

Then he went towards the palace and met with the wicked fairy; but what was his disgust when the ring showed him that her seeming beauty was all the work of magic, and she now appeared to him in her true shape as a wrinkled and spiteful-looking old hag, with a crook in her back and not a tooth remaining in her ugly mumbling gums! However, the Prince remembered Melissa's counsel and concealed the loathing which he felt for her; but he took the first opportunity of quitting her to don his armour and take a horse from her stables, on pretence that he wished to practise a little tilting at the ring in the palace yard. Next he girded on his good sword Balisarda, and passed his arm through the sling of the wonderful shield; and then, giving back the magic ring to Melissa that she might be able to release Duke Astulf and the other knights from their enchantment, he put spurs to his horse and made the best of his way towards the kingdom of Logistilla.

He had not gone far before he fell in with Alcina's chief huntsman, who carried his favourite falcon on his wrist, while the best of his hounds trotted at his heels. When this huntsman saw Roger ride past him at full gallop without saying a word he easily guessed his intention, and called out: "Stop! stop! no one is allowed to gallop away from here without giving an account of himself to the Queen." But Roger rode on without taking any notice of the fellow's impertinence, and thereupon the huntsman unhooded his falcon and threw it off from his wrist, and the bird flew round and round Prince Roger's head flapping its great wings in his face, while the huntsman came on behind like

the wind, and kept beating him about the shoulders with his staff; the hound, too, gave tongue and joined in the pursuit, trying to fasten his teeth into Roger's leg, but the knight's greaves saved him from the bite. Then Prince Roger thought: "I must rid myself of this troublesome company;" so he reined in his horse and drew Balisarda to attack them. But the huntsman, the hound, and the hawk were all enchanted, so that he could do nothing against them. For the hawk nearly blinded him by the blows of its wings against his eyes, and prevented him from taking aim with his sword; and if Balisarda did happen to come near the mark, the huntsman warded off the stroke with his staff, while the hound kept snapping at the Prince's legs, and so frightened his horse that he could not be kept steady for an instant. Much time had already been wasted in this wearisome conflict, and the Prince feared that if it lasted a few minutes longer he would have Alcina with all her people upon him; so without more delay he tore off the cover from his shield and flashed it in the eyes of his troublesome assailants. Then the huntsman, the hawk, and the hound all fell senseless together to the earth, and leaving them there the Prince proceeded on his journey.

He was not yet at the end of his troubles, for no one can escape from Alcina to Logistilla without much toil and many a laborious contest. And now the wicked fairy had found out all about his departure, and roused all her people to pursue him. So great was her rage at his flight, and her eagerness to capture him, that she left her palace and all the city quite empty of inhabitants, summoning every man, woman, and child of them to go and oppose the retreat of the Courteous Prince. She herself was following his track with a powerful army, and all the rest of her subjects she sent round in ships to the isthmus to rouse its savage guardians and help them to bar the passage. So when Roger came to the foot of the mountain he found it already occupied by hundreds of thousands of his enemies, while Alcina with her host of warriors was close behind, and threatened to overtake him every minute. Then the Prince saw that there was not a minute to be lost if he wished to

escape with liberty and life; so wheeling his horse about, he uncovered again the face of his wonderful shield, and rid himself at a glance of Alcina and the soldiers who were coming on with her behind him. Without a moment's delay he turned again and did the same by the masses who guarded the isthmus in front; and while they all lay stunned and helpless on the mountain which they were set to defend, he rode unopposed through the midst of them, and so, half dead with heat and fatigue, but joyful in spirit at his release from so degrading a bondage, arrived at last in the kingdom of the wise and virtuous Logistilla.

CHAPTER V.

HOW ROGER DELIVERED ANGELICA FROM GREAT PERIL AND LOST THE MAGIC RING AND THE HIPPOGRIF.

THE palace and court of Logistilla were not nearly so gaudy as those of her wicked sister; nevertheless, as Astulf had truly said to Prince Roger, they were really far more magnificent. But time is short, and I think you have had quite enough lately in the way of description; so I shall leave you to fancy for yourself what they were like, and will only say, to help out your imagination, that if you can get somebody to show you a photograph of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, with its great bosses of brown stone, and the marvellous tower built flush with its overhanging battlements, you will find in it a model of the stern and sober majesty which characterised the palace of this prudent Queen. Very glad was she to receive the visit of our Courteous Prince, and to find that so noble a knight had saved himself from the fatal witchcraft of Alcina; and accordingly she bade her servants pay him great honour and careful attendance, and set food and wine before him to refresh him after the fatigues of his journey. After this she invited him to an audience, and asked him if he would honour her court by remaining as her guest for a while; but the Prince modestly answered: "Most noble Queen, the shame of seeking my own pleasure is yet upon me, and I must follow where duty leads me if I would wipe away this blot from my honour. Wherefore, I render you infinite thanks for the favour which you show to me, but I beseech you give me leave to return at once to the land

of France; for my King has led his armies thither to fight against the great Emperor Charlemagne, and my post is at the side of my liege lord." At this Logistilla was mightily pleased, and graciously replied: "Sir Prince, you have spoken nobly, and not for all the world would I hinder you in the performance of your duty. But there is no better or quicker way of sending you back to France, than by teaching you to guide and control the Hippogrif which brought you thence; and for this you must have a particular bit and bridle, which cannot be ready before to-morrow morning. Be content, therefore, I pray you, to abide under my roof to-night; and to-morrow everything shall be in readiness for your departure." So Roger abode that night in the palace; but in the morning Melissa gave him back the magic ring, and the wise Queen Logistilla taught him how to keep the Hippogrif in hand by means of a golden bit and bridle, which her chief saddler had made for him during the night. So Roger thanked the good fairy for her kindness and for all the wise counsel which she had given him, and then, mounting his Hippogrif, bade adieu to the Fortunate Islands, and made the best of his way back to Europe. But now we must lose sight of him for a little, and you must put on your company manners, for I am going to introduce you to a Celebrated Personage.

You have already heard the name of Angelica, who was beloved by the peerless Count Roland, and now it is time for you to make the acquaintance of that beautiful princess. Well might she be called so, for she was by far the most beautiful woman in all the world; and to say nothing of Roland, who worshipped the very ground she trod on, half the kings of the Eastern countries were madly in love with her. Moreover, she was a mighty queen, and ruled over a wide domain in India, which she had left to follow Count Roland into France, out of gratitude for the great services which he had rendered her. But she was no sooner there than she longed with all her heart to be at home again; for she was not a bit in love with the peerless Count, or indeed with any other of her

numberless admirers, and had not the least intention of marrying him, as he desired. Meanwhile she had accompanied the army of the Emperor for want of anything better to do; and when the great battle of the Pyrenees was lost, and the Paladins were in full retreat, she thought: "Now I can escape unobserved to the sea-shore, and there perhaps I may find a ship which will carry me home to India." So she leaped upon her palfrey's back, and made haste to traverse a forest that grew close by.

She had hardly ridden a mile when she fell in with the noble Saracen Ferralu, who was one of the most devoted of her hundred lovers; but she soon got quit of him by contriving to set him by the ears with the Paladin Raynald, and galloping off alone while the two knights were in the middle of their conflict. Next she met Sacripant, King of Circassia, another of her lovers; but she had no fancy for his company either, and played him the self-same trick to get out of his sight. After this she rode on alone all the rest of the day, thinking that she would soon come to the sea-shore; but when the sun set, she found that she had completely lost herself in the forest, and began to wonder how she should ever find her way out of it, and where she could procure safe shelter for the coming night. Luckily at that moment the fast-failing light showed her the form of a venerable hermit, wrinkled with age, and wasted by constant fasting, whose long white beard descended to his waist, and who rode a fine Spanish donkey, which seemed far better fed and tended than its master. This good old man took her to his simple hermitage, where he gave her food and lodging for the night; and in the morning he showed her the way out of the forest and down to the sea, where he left her with instructions to follow the line of the coast till she came to the nearest port.

But the old hermit was hardly out of sight before a strange thing happened, which put poor Angelica in sad perplexity, and ended by bringing her into terrible danger. For her palfrey, which till now had always been the quietest and gentlest-mannered of hacks, suddenly took it into his

head to come to a dead stop, and refused to move a step upon the road which led along the shore. The more his mistress coaxed him, the more obstinate he grew in his unaccountable freak, till at last Angelica lost patience altogether, and caught him a smart cut with her riding-whip over the shoulder. I hope you never do anything of the sort yourself under any provocation; but at all events what followed may be a warning to you never to hit a horse in front of the saddle. For the palfrey no sooner felt the sting of the whip upon his shoulder, than he gave a great jump into the air, which nearly unhorsed the Princess, and then turned and rushed straight across the sands and into the very waves of the sea. Splash, splash! he galloped through the water, and Angelica was soon drenched from top to toe; but the palfrey still rushed madly on, till the water rose from his heels to his houghs, and from his houghs to the girths of his saddle. Even this was not enough to stop the headstrong beast, but when his footing failed him he took to swimming, and carried his unhappy rider through many a league of water; till at last he brought her to a desolate strip of sand far away from any road, and cut off by precipitous cliffs from all the country round. There Angelica dismounted, half dead with terror and fatigue, and dropping like a stone upon the sand, fell into the soundest sleep that ever overwhelmed a weary maiden.

Alas! the worst of her troubles was yet to come; for while she slept a pirate galley put in to the place, and the crew no sooner saw her lying upon the shore than they bound her hand and foot, and in spite of her tears and prayers bore her off to their ship, and carried her captive to their own country. It would have been bad enough had they doomed this beautiful Princess to a life of toil and slavery; but these cruel men reserved her for a still more lamentable fate. For they were natives of the island of Ebuda, the inhabitants of which were compelled to offer a beautiful maiden every day as a victim to a sea-monster that infested their shores; and in order to save their own daughters from so dreadful a fate they turned pirates, and scoured the seas far and wide, carrying off all

the maidens whom they could lay hands on to appease the hunger of their terrible oppressor. This island of Ebuda lay off the western coast of Ireland, and was a place of no little renown in its day; but now it is no use looking for it in your map, for it no longer exists, and its very name has well-nigh been forgotten. For a great many years ago it came to the conclusion that its mission in the world was accomplished, and the sooner it made an end of itself the better. So one fine night it sank beneath the sea; and its inhabitants were changed into mermen and mermaids, who have ever since occupied their spare time in singing dirges to the crews of the Greenland whalers. But at the time of my story, and for many centuries afterwards, this Ebuda was a celebrated place, and I shall have occasion to mention it again when I come to tell you about the journeys of the peerless Count Roland.

Thither, then, the pirates brought the beautiful Princess Angelica, intending to offer her as a victim to the Orc, as the terrible sea-monster was called. But their hard hearts were so touched by her marvellous beauty that they put off the fatal day as long as possible, and resolved that they would spare her while they had any other captives to offer. Meanwhile she was kept in prison, and guarded night and day by the women of the place; but all the people treated her kindly, and did what they could to lighten the burden of her distress. At length, however, the last of their captive maidens had been devoured by the Orc, and Angelica's turn could no longer be delayed. So one morning they took her from her prison and led her down to the shore of the island, where they bound her firmly to a rock and left her—ah! the pity of it—to await the coming of the monster.

But while this series of misfortunes was befalling Angelica, Roger was returning on his Hippogrif to France; only, as he foolishly travelled without a pocket compass, he steered his beast rather too far to the northward, and missing the latitude of Paris passed over the island of Ebuda at the very time when the beautiful Princess was standing there bound to the rock and expecting the most horrible of

deaths. Full of compassion at so pitiable a sight, the Prince drew near to the weeping maiden and asked her what was the meaning of her bondage, and who had dared to subject her to such foul indignity. And Angelica answered him with groans and tears: "Alas, Sir Knight! I am doomed to be eaten alive by a horrible mo——;" but before she could finish the word "monster," a fearful commotion in the sea made her shriek aloud with terror, and the Orc raised his loathsome head above the breakers. The creature was covered all over with scales like those of a crocodile; his shapeless body was as big as any six full-grown hippopotami put together, and he lashed the waves with a tail as long as a frigate's mainmast, while a frightful pair of gleaming tusks protruded from the vast cavern of his mouth. Well might the poor Princess scream with terror at the hideous sight; but Roger dug the spurs into his Hippogrif and caught the monster a stunning blow upon the head with his sword. Mad with rage, the Orc turned from his helpless victim and dashed to and fro through the water after the shadow of the Hippogrif, while Roger redoubled his blows upon its unwieldy head and neck. Unluckily the hard scales were proof against the keenest steel, and the Prince began to fear that even his marvellous Balisarda would break in his hand before he could make any impression on the monster. So he flew back to the shore and slipped the magic ring on Angelica's finger that she might suffer nothing from the enchantment which he purposed to use, after which he pulled out his shield from its case and flashed it in the eyes of the Orc. Down fell the monster with a crash, and without wasting more time in the hopeless endeavour to slay him, Roger hastened to release the Princess from her chains and lift her up to the saddle in front of him. Then he made the Hippogrif fly up and travel at his best pace through the air, so that they soon lost sight of the island of Ebuda, and arrived that very afternoon in the fair realm of France.

Naturally Angelica was at first filled with fervent gratitude to her preserver, and thanked him with sobs and tears for her deliverance. But she was a wayward and

fickle-minded Princess, and she had not been seated five minutes in front of him on the Hippogrif before her enthusiasm began to cool, and she said to herself quite calmly: "Certainly it was uncommonly good of him." Five minutes more and she fell to pouting her beautiful lips and thinking: "After all, it was no more than his duty;" and long before they arrived in France all idea of the debt she owed him had gone out of her head, and she began to feel heartily tired of his company. Presently her eye lighted on her finger round which the Prince had slipped the magic ring, and she recognised the precious jewel at a glance; for, as I told you, it had formerly been her own property and the most valued of all her rich possessions. "Oh! oh!" she thought to herself, "here is a piece of luck indeed! But where in the world, I wonder, can this brave fellow have picked up my magic jewel? Anyhow I've got it back at last, and I'll take good care not to lose it a second time." She was indeed as glad of this discovery as if she had been already safe home in her own kingdom, and thought gleefully that now she need ask nobody's assistance, but could travel back to India or anywhere else that she chose without fear of the least annoyance.

Meanwhile the Hippogrif had brought them safely to Brittany and set them down in a beautiful wood not far from the rocky coast. No sooner did this ungrateful Princess feel her foot once more on the solid ground than she thought: "It is high time for me to part company with this tiresome knight;" and slipping the ring into her mouth she disappeared in an instant from the view of her unlucky deliverer. For a moment Roger was lost in amazement, and doubted whether he were awake or asleep; but very soon he remembered that he had left the ring upon her finger, and understood the full extent of his misfortune. Deeply he lamented it, for Melissa had specially charged him to give back the ring to Bradamante; but he knew there was no chance of his finding the vanished maiden again, so with a heavy heart he made up his mind to continue his journey.

"Misfortunes never come single," and "It never rains

but it pours;" two proverbs which you will find about as true as any proverb can be expected to be. Poor Roger had soon an opportunity of proving their correctness, for as ill-luck would have it he was not only robbed of the ring on this fatal afternoon, but lost his useful Hippogrif and himself into the bargain; and this was how it happened.

When he found that Angelica had made off with the magic jewel he mounted again and rode a long way through the air, till he found himself flying over a vast forest, in the midst of which bubbled up a tempting spring of clear water. There he brought his winged steed to earth and dismounted to quench his raging thirst; but he had hardly taken off his helmet and stooped his head over the spring before a ruffian-like peasant leaped out of a neighbouring thicket, untied the Hippogrif's bridle which Roger had made fast to a tree, and vaulting on the creature's back, made off with him through the glades of the forest. Up jumped the Prince at the noise and gave chase as fast as his legs could carry him, while the peasant seemed mightily to enjoy the fun, and regulated the Hippogrif's pace so as to keep just a yard or two in front of the pursuing knight. Thus he lured him on till they came in sight of a stately palace built in a clearing of the forest, and then the robber gave the rein to his beast and vanished in a moment through the gate of the walled enclosure. Panting for breath, Roger followed him through the doorway, but when he came inside the place not a trace could he see of peasant or Hippogrif. He searched every corner of the yard and every stall in the stables, but without the smallest success; then he went into the house itself and wandered through all its chambers, both upstairs and down, but no peasant and no Hippogrif were anywhere to be seen. And that will hardly surprise you much, for I daresay you have already guessed that this palace was another trick of our clever friend Atlas, and the peasant-thief was in truth no other than the cunning old enchanter himself. Of course the palace was enchanted, and the particular enchantment of it was that whoever came there must spend the rest of his life wandering about it in

a hopeless search after his missing property. So you see poor Roger lost the ring, the Hippogrif, and himself, all in one day; and now we must leave him roaming about the enchanted precincts, for it is time this chapter came to an end.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW ROGER AND BRADAMANTE MET EACH OTHER AND JOURNEYED TOGETHER, AND HOW THEY WERE SEPARATED AGAIN.

YOU must not suppose that Roger was the only person whom cunning old Atlas had entrapped into his newly-built palace; on the contrary, not a knight passed through that forest but the enchanter met him in some shape or other and enticed him into the enchanted precincts. To one he appeared as a giant carrying off a distressed damsel by force in his arms, to another as a thief who stole just the thing that he prized the most of his equipment, while a third saw him in the shape of an old witch in a steeple-crowned hat, who snatched the helmet from his head and flew off with it on her broomstick through the air. To many, also, he took the likeness of those whom they loved best in the world, and in that form seemed to beckon them along the road to the palace; thus, one thought he was following in the footsteps of his lady-love, another that his faithful squire was showing him the way through the forest, and yet another that his dearest friend and comrade in arms was summoning him to undertake some knightly enterprise. In this way the cunning enchanter had beguiled many of the principal knights from both the hostile armies. Friends and enemies, Christians and Saracens, wandered ceaselessly about his palace, and so strong was the enchantment of the place that they never recognised one another, but pursued each his own fruitless search as if there were not a human being to be seen in the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, Bradamante had been anxiously waiting for Roger to return to her, as Melissa had promised, but days and weeks passed away and still the Prince did not make his appearance. Every day that failed to bring him added to the distress of the noble damsel, who knew not what to think of her lover's absence, and fancied that he must have forgotten all about her, or still worse, that he had died upon the road. At last she could bear the suspense no longer, and resolved to travel over the world till she either found him or got news of him; but just as she was setting out the kind Melissa came to visit her, and soon set her at ease by saying: "Noble lady, Prince Roger is alive and loves you as devotedly as ever; but he cannot come hither because he has fallen again into the clutches of the enchanter Atlas. Now, therefore, it is well that I find you armed and on horseback, for you must follow me to deliver him once again from this troublesome old magician." The news that her beloved Prince was alive and faithful put new life into Bradamante, and she eagerly begged Melissa to tell her how Atlas had contrived to capture him, and what she must do to effect his deliverance. But Melissa said: "First let us start upon our journey, for we have a long distance to go, and as we ride I shall have plenty of time to tell you all that has happened since I saw you last."

So they rode side by side, while the kind enchantress told Bradamante all that you have read in the last couple of chapters, and finished her account by saying: "Now, we are not far from the forest, and I will explain to you the trick which Roger's foster-father will try to play upon you, and how you may defeat him and deliver the Prince out of his hand. But pay great attention to my instructions, and be sure you follow them to the letter, otherwise you will lose your own liberty without winning that of your lover. When you have ridden a little way into the forest you will come upon a couple of giants apparently ill-treating a valiant knight; and as you draw nearer you will see that their victim has the form and features of Prince Roger, and in Roger's voice he will call to you for help against his

oppressors. But don't believe your own eyes or ears, for the seeming Roger will really be the enchanter himself, and the giants are two spirits whom he compels by magic to do his bidding. Well I know that it will cost you a hard struggle to do violence to one who bears the likeness of your Prince; nevertheless, you must harden your heart and cut off his head with your sword, for I tell you again that it will be Atlas whom you attack, and that is the only way in which you can free your lover from his captivity." So Bradamante promised to do as Melissa advised her, and thereupon the kind enchantress left her to take her way alone through the forest.

She had not ridden far before she came in sight of the two giants, who had bound the knight's hands behind his back, and were dragging him roughly along between them. And as Melissa had foretold, the captive was to all appearance no other than the Courteous Prince, and cried out to Bradamante to deliver him from the grasp of these villainous giants. Now, when the noble damsel saw the form of her lover thus bound and ill-treated before her eyes, her heart was stirred with love and pity, so that her prudence completely forsook her, and in spite of Melissa's warning she fell headlong into the trap laid for her by the old enchanter. For she thought: "Certainly this is my Roger himself whom I see, and I cannot possibly be mistaken about my own lover's identity." So she called to the giants to let go their prisoner, and when she saw that they paid no heed to her, she drew her sword from the scabbard and rushed to attack the nearest of them. But while she was busy fighting against the one, the other threw the pretended Roger over his shoulder and ran off with him at a good pace along the path. Immediately Bradamante left the first giant alone, and spurred in pursuit of his companion; but the huge fellow made no more of the weight upon his back than a champion runner makes of the corks in his hands, and kept well ahead of the damsel till he brought her within sight of the enchanted palace. Then he redoubled his speed and shot through the gateway a good hundred yards ahead of her, and she followed him

recklessly into the trap without a thought of the caution which Melissa had given her. Of course, when she got inside not a sign of the giant or his captive was to be seen, and she went hunting about the rooms of the palace as fruitlessly as all the rest of those assembled within it. And thus it came about that Roger and Bradamante were caught in the same snare and dwelt under the same roof for many weeks afterwards; but neither could recognise the other because of the enchantment of the place, though they passed within a yard of each other a hundred times a day.

But when they were delivered at last from their captivity —"How were they delivered?" you want to know; ah! that is my secret for the present, and you must read a good many more chapters before you find it out, for it belongs to the history of Duke Astulf's achievements, and I can't tell you anything out of the proper order. But you shall hear about it all in good time, and till then you must take my word for it that they escaped safe and sound from the palace, with each a good horse to ride upon. Well, when they were delivered they knew each other in a moment, and rushed into each other's arms in a transport of joy; only they felt it a sad waste of time that they should have been so long in the same house without knowing either of the other's presence, or being able to make the best of their fellowship in imprisonment. Many hours they spent in talking over all that had happened since they parted; and after that they rode side by side through the forest, and fell to discoursing of their love and planning their future marriage. As to that, Bradamante said that Roger must first become a Christian, to which the Prince readily agreed, for he had long been intending to do so, and had only waited for a fitting opportunity. And, in fact, his father and all his ancestors had been Christians before him, and it was by a mere accident that Roger himself, left an orphan from the very day of his birth, had been brought up by Atlas as a Saracen. Bradamante was delighted at getting his consent, and said joyfully: "We will go together to the beautiful Abbey of Vallombrosa amid the hills of Tuscany, where you shall

carry out your design: and afterwards you must accompany me to my home in Montalbano, and ask me in marriage of my father Hammon."

Thus talking they came to the edge of the forest, where they saw a damsel sitting by the roadside weeping as though her heart would break. Roger, whose courtesy made him ever ready to give help to those who needed it, and especially to a woman in distress, went up and saluted her kindly, and asked what was the reason of her grief, and whether he and his companion could render her any aid in her necessity. To which the damsel answered through her tears: "Woe is me! Sir Knight; I weep for the sad fate of a gentle youth who is doomed to die by the cruellest of deaths. Poor lad! he fell in love with my mistress, the lovely Princess Mayblossom, daughter of Marsilius, King of Spain, and gained admittance to her court by disguising himself in the garb of a woman. In this disguise he won the heart of Mayblossom and persuaded her to marry him by stealth, after which they lived together for a while in perfect love and happiness, while every one supposed the Princess's husband to be a gentle maiden. But alas! the truth presently came to the ears of her father the King; and when he knew it he was wild with anger, and sent orders for the Princess to be shut up in a dismal dungeon for the rest of her life, and her husband to be burned alive in the great square of the town. This very afternoon the sentence is to be executed, and I fled away that I might not witness so cruel a spectacle." And with that the damsel burst afresh into a flood of tears, and seemed as though she would die for sorrow. But when Bradamante heard the story she turned pale and faint with fear, for she knew only too surely who the unhappy youth must be. And turning to Roger, she cried: "Haste! haste! let us go to the rescue without a moment's delay; perhaps we may still be in time to save the poor youth from so frightful a death." Roger was hardly less eager for the enterprise, though he knew not all the cause of his lady's anxiety; so he gave his hand to the weeping maid, and said: "Fair damsel, this is a time for action, not for tears; prithee

mount your palfrey and lead us at once to the town, and if only we arrive in time I promise you our succour will not be in vain." The bold words of Roger and his princely bearing reassured the damsel a little, so that she dried her tears and prepared to lead the way to the town, which was only a few miles distant; for fortunately the Princess had followed her father out of Spain, and was holding her court in France when the lamentable discovery was made.

Presently, however, they came to a fork in the road, where the damsel fell to weeping again, and said: "Ah! valiant sirs, if only we could take the left-hand path we should certainly arrive in good time, for it is shorter by four or five miles than the other. Still we must do the best we can with the longer road, for the shorter leads past the castle of Count Pinabel, who permits no one to pass armed by his gates." With these words she was turning her palfrey's head to the right, when Roger cried: "To the left, fair damsel! to the left! if that is the path we want; for I suffer no man to hinder me on my way." And Bradamante laughed aloud in spite of her trouble, and said: "Aha! I have an old score to settle with this worthy Pinabel, and it shall go hard but I will pay him the two accounts with one coin. But tell us in what manner the scoundrel dares to block the road against a traveller." To this the damsel answered: "You must know, valiant sirs, that a week ago four very gallant knights came to the castle and requested Count Pinabel to give them lodging for the night, and he received them with great magnificence, as though it were his greatest pleasure to do them honour. But while they were asleep the traitor had them seized and bound, and then threatened them with instant death if they did not swear to perform his bidding. To save their lives the knights were constrained to take the vow; and then the Count said that they must stay with him for a year and a day, during which they must allow no man to pass the castle gates without surrendering his horse and armour. So if any knight refuses to surrender them peaceably, the four champions decide by lot which of them shall first oppose him; and, if the knight is overthrown, his horse and arms

are taken from him immediately; but if it is the champion who is vanquished, then his three companions are bound by their vow to go all together against the conqueror and fight three against one till they overcome him. The custom is scarcely a week old, as I have told you; yet already many knights have been despoiled by force, and many more have laid down their arms rather than come to an encounter, for the four champions are very valiant and of great renown."

The maiden had hardly finished speaking before they came in sight of the castle, and straightway a herald came riding towards them and summoned them to surrender their horses and arms; but when Roger and Bradamante refused with scorn, he rode back in haste to the castle and carried their message of defiance to the Count and all who held with him. Meanwhile Roger implored Bradamante to let him undertake alone the whole burden of this fight against the champions, to which the noble damsel would hardly consent, for she was eager to bear her share in the enterprise. But she could not refuse her lover a boon which he asked so earnestly as a proof of her trust in him and for the greater honour of his own name; so at length she reluctantly consented to stand aside and take no part against the strangers; but she said: "If Pinabel himself comes out you must leave him to me, for I have long owed him a debt which I hope to discharge to-day."

By the time they had settled this compact the portcullis of the castle gate was raised again, and the first of the four champions rode forth over the drawbridge. And after him came the false Count Pinabel himself at the head of a band of soldiers, with whom he stationed himself in rear of Roger and Bradamante, that they might have no hope of retreating by the way they had come. Little those gallant lovers thought of retreating, who had never in their lives turned their backs upon any foe; but you see Pinabel had no notion who were the warriors whom he had provoked by his insolent challenge. Roger, however, soon showed the champion who opposed him that he had to deal with no common enemy. As soon as their lances were laid in rest they put spurs to their gallant chargers and met with a

shock that made the castle walls ring with its echo. The stranger was a valiant and skilful knight enough, but a better than he would have been a poor match for our Courteous Prince; and his lance bent and broke against the breast-plate without making Roger so much as waver in his seat. But the Prince aimed his lance so truly, and held it so firmly, that he drove its point clean through his adversary's shield and into the shoulder beyond, and, bearing the unknown knight out of his saddle, laid him stunned and bleeding on the ground.

The prowess of Prince Roger excited the admiration of the three remaining champions, who had watched the contest from the battlements of the castle, and would willingly have withdrawn from their engagement to attack him. Not that they feared to meet him in fair fight, for they were all men of dauntless courage who would gladly brave a hundred deaths where honour was to be won; but it seemed to them foul dishonour to assail an adversary with such vantage of numbers on their side. So they went to Pinabel's wife,—the same whom Bradamante had set free with the other prisoners from the castle of steel,—and besought her to absolve them from their compact, or at least to allow them to fight one by one against the Prince. But the Countess was as mean and treacherous as her husband, and only said: "You should have thought about all that when you lay bound and helpless in our power; now you have taken the vow, and the sooner you fulfil it the better." So with heavy hearts they rode out of the castle, and couched their lances all at once against the Prince. But one of them spurred on a little quicker than the other two, and came to blows with Roger while they were still a yard or two behind. Our Prince's lance struck full and true as before, but that of the stranger knight caught the bottom of his opponent's shield, and, glancing upwards along its surface, rent the silken cover in twain from end to end. Immediately the terrible light flashed forth and gave Roger an easier victory than he desired; for the three champions and all the crowd of bystanders fell senseless to the earth, and he found no one left to oppose him.

"But what had Bradamante been doing all this time?" That is what I am just going to tell you; for, if you remember, I promised you in the first chapter that Pinabel's treachery should lead to his own death before we had done with him. Now, when Bradamante saw that the false Count had stationed himself behind her with his soldiers, she thought: "Here is my chance of giving this scoundrel his reward;" and unsheathing her sword she charged towards him, crying: "Draw and defend yourself, traitor and felon, if you dare; for I am Bradamante whom you sought to slay by treachery." But Pinabel was the veriest coward on the face of the earth, and when he beheld his intended victim safe and sound before his eyes, with the naked blade gleaming in her hand, and heard her stern voice uttering terrible threats of vengeance, his craven heart failed him and his very lips were blanched with terror, and he turned and fled from before her, screaming: "It is a ghost! it is a ghost! come back to punish me for my treason." He was mounted on Bradamante's charger, which was a far better horse than any of his own, and thanks to its speed, which he quickened with frantic efforts of whip and spur, he was able for a long time to keep out of reach of the angry damsel. Thus they galloped over hedges and ditches for many a mile, till they found themselves at last in the midst of a thick and gloomy forest. There Pinabel's fright was so great that he could not guide his horse among the trees, and the bewildered animal slackened his headlong pace and refused to answer any longer to the whip. So Bradamante easily overtook the Count, and severed his head from his body with a single stroke, and thus dealt the villain just punishment for his treachery, while at the same time she recovered possession of her own horse.

Then she left the body lying in the wood, and turned to go back to her Prince; but to her dismay she found she had completely lost her way, and there was nobody at hand to guide her out of the forest. And thus this unlucky pair of lovers were separated once more after a few short hours of companionship, and many a month was to pass before they could find each other again.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW ROGER THREW AWAY THE WONDERFUL SHIELD AND SAVED RICHARDETTO'S LIFE.

Now when Roger found that his enemies were fallen before him, he wondered at first what could be the cause of their confusion, for he had not noticed how the cover of his shield had been torn by his adversary's lance. Very soon, however, he saw what had happened, and then his first thought was for Bradamante, whom he expected to find lying with the rest upon the ground. But when he had satisfied himself that the noble damsel was nowhere within sight, he remembered her anxiety to save the condemned youth from his doom, and he thought: "Doubtless she escaped my notice while I was busy with these valiant champions, and is gone before me to the city appointed for the execution." Supposing that he would certainly find her there, and imagining that she might need his help to effect the rescue, he resolved to push forward with all speed to the town. So he picked up the maiden who had served them as a guide—for she had been struck senseless like the rest by the flash of the wonderful shield—and laid her across his own saddlebow. Then he took her palfrey by the bridle and led him along beside him, and before they had gone a mile she recovered her senses and was able to mount again and guide him towards the city.

So the maiden rode in front as before, but Roger followed after her with a frown upon his brow, and his heart was heavy within him. For I have told you already

that he was the most punctilious of men, and esteemed nothing in comparison with the maintenance of his honour and renown. And now he bethought him how he had gained his easy victory over the champions through the accident to the cover of his shield, and exclaimed in the bitterness of his spirit: "Men will point at me and say, 'Lo! this is the fellow who wins battles by spells and enchantments, because his own courage and skill are lacking to him.' Woe is me! with what face shall I meet my King and the bold knights my companions? Or how shall I clear myself of this dishonour in the sight of my noble lady? Surely Agramant and all his lieges will despise me henceforth for a coward, and the valiant Bradamante will hold me unworthy of her love." This thought was so intolerable to him that he groaned aloud in his wrath, and refused to be comforted by all that the damsel who guided him could say. Now, as they journeyed along the road they came presently to the mouth of a deep well, from which the people were wont to draw water for their herds in the droughts of summer. There Prince Roger leaped from his saddle, and cried: "Never again shall this shield bring shame upon a noble knight!" With these words he plucked the wonderful shield from his arm and cast it into the mouth of the well, and the steel plate rang and clattered against the rocky sides till it fell with a splash into the depths of the water below. Next the Prince seized a great boulder of rock in both hands and hurled it also down the well, that no one might ever be able to draw up the enchanted shield from the bottom where it lay. Then his heart was lightened, for he thought: "I have atoned for my dishonour, and have prevented such disgrace in the future;" so he mounted his charger again and followed his guide with all speed to the fatal city.

They were just within sight of the walls when they fell in with one of King Agramant's couriers, who recognised Prince Roger at a glance, and summoned him to join the army before Paris without delay, saying that the Saracen King had need of the succour of all his knights. To which Roger answered that for the moment he was engaged in

an adventure that brooked no delay; but in an hour or two he hoped to have brought it to a good end, and then he would use all diligence in the service of his king. None the less he was terribly annoyed at the summons, for he earnestly desired to find Bradamante, and go with her to Vallombrosa as they had arranged; but honour and duty called him to the side of his king, and Roger was one who followed honour and duty through every obstacle. The messenger was well content with his answer, and galloped on to find the other knights to whom Agramant had sent him, while Roger and his companion arrived a little before sunset at the town.

They found the entrance guarded by a company of soldiers, but the maiden was well known to the captain of the gate, who had often seen her at the court of Princess Mayblossom, her mistress. So when she demanded a passage for the Prince and herself, he allowed it without question, and they rode unopposed through the gate and along the High Street of the city, till they came to the square of the market-place, where the execution was appointed to take place. There they found a great crowd of the inhabitants, who were gathered to witness the cruel spectacle. Some came there out of pity for the unhappy youth, others to gratify their savage thirst for bloodshed and cruelty; but the greater part were drawn together by mere idle curiosity, and so great was the number of them that Roger could hardly push his way through the throng. But the centre of the place was held by two regiments of soldiers drawn up in a hollow square; and in the midst of this hollow square was planted the stake, surrounded by a great pile of logs and brushwood, and bundles of furze and straw. On the top of this pile two soldiers had just placed the wretched victim, who was clad in a single woollen tunic that covered him from the throat to the knees; his bare arms were bound tight behind his back, and his ankles secured in heavy fetters, while a strong iron chain encircled his waist and fastened him to the stake of doom.

But what was Roger's astonishment when he glanced at

the poor lad's face and seemed to behold the beauteous features of his lady-love! A cold shudder convulsed his limbs and a cry of rage and horror burst from his lips; but alas! he could feel no doubt about the matter; here were the very features, the very height and size of Bradamante; even the colour of the hair was the same, and only in the shortness of it did the doomed victim differ from the noble damsel as her lover had last beheld her. Yet how, thought the Prince, could she be come into this terrible danger? Could she have been overpowered in trying to deliver the youth? Then the soldiers must have fastened her there in his place in revenge for her brave attempt. Had they cut off her beautiful hair in mockery and degradation? Ah! why was she so rash in her generosity? Why would she not wait till her lover could share with her in the enterprise? How different had been the issue if they had joined together in the contest! But at least he was come in time to prevent the worst; at least he would save her from the flames that menaced her. Yet why did she seem not to recognise her Prince? She must surely have seen him and heard his cry of horror. Then why no call in answer? why no glance of the eyes to show him that she trusted in his help? Could this really be Bradamante whom he saw? Alas! his eyes could never cheat him about the person of his lady. And there was not a moment to be lost in saving her; another minute and the pile would be lighted, and the cruel flames would leap up to consume her beautiful limbs.

Maddened at the horrible thought, Roger snatched forth Balisarda from the scabbard at the very moment when the executioner was advancing with his torch to light the pile. With a great shout of "Rescue! rescue! a Roger to the rescue!" he cut his way through the masses of the crowd and through the wonder-stricken ranks of soldiers. Straight up to the executioner he rode and split open his skull with a single blow; then he seized the torch, which had happily fallen away from the pile, and flung it among the shrieking crowd. Vainly the soldiers pressed upon him and strove to overwhelm him, for he took his stand in front of their

destined victim, and cut them down as fast as they came within his reach. Never a stroke he dealt but a soldier fell dead beneath it, and sometimes two or three heads were shorn clean from their shoulders with one sweep of the terrible Balisarda. In three or four minutes a hundred corpses lay around him, while neither he nor the victim whom he guarded was the worse by a single wound. Soon the foremost soldiers shrank backward from his reach, and struggled to resist the pressure of their comrades from behind, while their chiefs strove in vain to encourage them, and the dense mass swayed backwards and forwards as fear or anger prompted them. Roger marked well the wavering spirit of his enemies, and laughed within himself to think that one man should put to shame a thousand. Faster and harder he struck among the throng, and thicker every instant grew the heap of mangled corpses, till all the host was smitten with panic and rushed headlong away from the stake and its terrible defender. Mingled among the soldiers fled the hapless populace, so that every outlet was choked by their numbers and many were trampled to death by the rush of their frantic companions, while yet more fell beneath the blows of the avenging sword. Furious with anger at the dastardly deed which they had planned, Roger spared none who came within his reach, but leaped amid the herd of fugitives as a hungry lion leaps within the pen of trembling cattle. And he ceased not from his fury till the whole square was cumbered with the bodies of the slain, while all who could escape had fled far beyond the city walls and left him alone with the victim whom he had saved from death.

Thereupon the rescued youth called to him and said: "Valiant Sir Knight, I am become bound to you this evening for a debt which I can never repay; but of your courtesy prithee tell me your name and station, that I may know who has rendered me this great and unlooked-for service." Now, when Roger heard the voice of the youth he wondered yet more, and said within himself: "Lo! I see the face of my Bradamante, but I hear not my lady's gentle voice, neither is it in such wise that she is wont to

address her lover." So, being very curious to know more about the beautiful lad, he did not answer his question outright, but said as he loosened him from his chains: "Your face is not strange to me, fair youth, and methinks this is not the first occasion of our meeting; but my memory serves me so ill that I remember not where or how I have encountered you." And the grateful lad answered him and said: "I think not, Sir Knight, that I have ever heretofore beheld you; for of a surety I should not easily forget such a semblance and bearing as yours. But it may be that you have met with my twin-sister, who bears armour and does the deeds of a gallant knight; and you are not the first, nor yet the hundredth, who has fallen under the same mistake. For I am Richardetto, the son of Hammon, and twin-brother of the noble Bradamante; and we are so like to one another that the very mother who bare us cannot discern between us, save only by the different fashions of our hair. In truth it was this very likeness which lately won me my greatest happiness, and which was even now like to bring me to my death by the flames. For many months ago the lovely Princess Mayblossom met my sister in the forest and took her home to her own castle, where she entertained her with such honour and affection as the like was never known in any friendship of noble women. Long before this I had seen the Princess by chance, and loved her with passionate fervour; but she knew nothing of me or of my love, which I hid sorrowfully in the depths of my heart, as despairing of any means to gain her favour. But when Bradamante came home and told us of all that had befallen her, here, methought, was a way to bring my love to a happy issue; so that very night I stole from my bed and took the horse and armour of my sister, and thus journeyed to Mayblossom's castle. When I arrived there they all supposed that Bradamante was returned to visit them, whereat the Princess was beside herself with joy, and bestowed a rich jewel on the damsel who first announced my coming. Then they led me in and clad me in the robes of a woman, while the Princess kissed me on the mouth and received me with such honour

as might have suited with the state of the fairest queen on earth. But presently I told her my secret; and when she knew that I was a man she fell deeply in love with me, even as I with her, and we arranged how we might be married by stealth and how I might still remain with her in disguise. All our plans succeeded beyond our hopes, and for many weeks we dwelt together in transports of bliss; but at last our secret was discovered and came to the ears of King Marsilius. In the wrath of his heart the King sentenced me to the stake, from which you have just preserved me; but he commanded the wretched Mayblossom to be shut up in a dreary dungeon, and thence, if you will once more lend me your aid, we will immediately essay to deliver her."

Very willingly did Roger promise his help in so good a cause, when who should appear before them but the lovely Princess herself, accompanied by the damsel who had guided Prince Roger to the town. For this loyal damsel had not been idle nor forgetful of her imprisoned mistress; but when she saw how all the people fled from the face of Roger she hastened to the palace, where no one was left to oppose her, and finding there the dungeon keys she flew down the deserted steps and soon set Mayblossom free from her vile captivity. I leave you to imagine with what joy the delivered Princess and her bridegroom rushed into each other's arms; how they clasped each other as though they feared to be torn asunder again if they relaxed their embrace for an instant; and how they overwhelmed the Courteous Prince and the faithful maiden with the fervour of their gratitude. At length, however, Roger managed to remind them that the sooner they quitted this hateful town the better; so they all four mounted their horses and rode the whole night long by the moonlight till they came in the morning to the strong castle of Agrismont, where Aldigier of Clairmont, the cousin of Richardetto, bare rule.

And there you must say good-bye to the courteous Prince Roger and do without his company for a great many chapters to come; for it is time that I told you something about the journeys of the peerless Count Roland.

PART II.

THE JOURNEYS AND MADNESS OF ROLAND.

CHAPTER I.

HOW ROLAND WENT IN SEARCH OF ANGELICA AND DELIVERED OLYMPIA AND DUKE BIRON.

ATTENTION! children; keep your ears open and your mouths shut, and you shall hear something about the deeds of the most perfect knight in all the world. I have told you already that the peerless Count Roland was nephew to the great Emperor Charlemagne and chief among the Paladins of France. He was the handsomest man at his uncle's court, taller by a head than the tallest of his comrades, and so strong and valiant that he could hold his own against any two of them together in battle or tournament; he wore the wonderful armour that had once belonged to Hector, Prince of Troy, and his sword Durindana was the heaviest and sharpest blade that ever was forged; indeed, not a dozen knights in all the world were strong enough to wield it, and not one of them could have performed with it the feats of its master Roland. At the same time the peerless Count was the gentlest and kindest-mannered man that ever went forth to battle, ever ready to use his might in defence of the weak and oppressed, and never so happy as when he got a chance to kill a ruffian and rescue his victim at one blow.

Alas! that so brave and gentle a knight should be wretched and forlorn of spirit; you would think that he, who spent all his life in giving happiness to others, ought to have been the happiest of men himself. But in an unlucky hour our noble Count set eyes on the beautiful Princess Angelica, and instantly fell so deeply in love with

her that from that moment all peace of mind forsook him, and his days were spent in continual sighing and lamentation. For I have told you already that Angelica cared never a rap for him; and if you remember how ungrateful she had been to Roger after he had saved her from the Orc, you will see what a fickle Princess she was, and how unworthy, in spite of all her beauty, to be loved by the peerless Roland.

Now matters were still in this unsatisfactory state between them when the great battle of the Pyrenees was fought, and Angelica, as you know, fled away on her palfrey through the forest, hoping to make her way to some seaport town where she could find a ship to carry her home to India. Roland was just then in another part of the field fighting with all his might to cover the retreat of the Emperor, so that it was pitch dark before he got back to his uncle's quarters and found the whole army in an uproar because the beautiful Princess Angelica was nowhere to be seen. Imagine the consternation of her lover at this terrible news! All that night he rushed up and down the camp calling her frantically by name and seeking her under every tent and by every bivouac fire; but every hole and corner had been searched before he arrived, and Angelica, as we know, was far away in the good old hermit's hut. Never was such a pitiful case; but what was poor Count Roland to do? He was eager to set out at once and search the whole world through for his Princess; but the Emperor Charlemagne was hastening with his beaten army to Paris, and could not spare the best of his Paladins, while Roland was bound in honour to stay with his uncle and his comrades and share their perils and their toils. So he rode back, tortured with grief and anxiety, to Paris, where the whole Christian army shut themselves up within the walls and prepared to defend the city. King Agramant and his Saracens were not long in following them, and the siege of Paris was begun, about which I shall have a good deal to tell you when we come to the fourth part of this history. But at present all you need know is, that it was a time of great peril to all Christendom, in which Roland and all the other Paladins

had their hands full of fighting; for the Saracens were constantly assaulting the city, and the Christians had hard work to remain masters of their own walls, wherein was their last hope of defence against their enemies. For several weeks, therefore, Roland stayed in Paris, and fought more fiercely than he had ever fought before; for the thought of Angelica was constantly in his mind, maddening him to frenzy in the stress of battle, and haunting him at night with fearful doubts about her fate, so that he could get no rest for the anguish of his heart.

One night, at last, after tossing feverishly on his bed as usual, he fell into a short troubled sleep, from which he was awakened by a horrible dream. He dreamed that he was back again with Angelica in her Indian kingdom, and they were walking together in the cool of the evening under a grove of stately palm-trees. Never had any grove appeared so beautiful, or the notes of the gay-feathered singing-birds so sweet; for never before had the Princess been so kind and gentle to her lover. Thus they walked together in the fulness of joy, when suddenly the air grew black, and a fearful hurricane burst upon the place where they stood. The beautiful palm-trees were torn up by the roots, and fell crashing to the earth; whole branches were driven whirling through the air, and the loveliness of the grove was changed in a moment to desolation. Instantly the Count turned to grasp the hand of his lady-love and save her from the falling trees; but to his horror he found that she was no longer beside him! In the agony of his despair he cried aloud, "Angelica! Angelica!" and in answer he seemed to hear her voice faint and far away, but wailing as though she were in great pain, and imploring him to hasten to her rescue. But the air was dark around him, so that he could not see where she was, while her voice seemed to come now from one side and now from the other; and thus he stood for a while in grievous perplexity, till of a sudden the roar of the wind changed and burst in a hoarse, angry shriek, which screamed, "Never! never! never!" in his ears. With that frightful scream Count Roland awoke, and found himself alone in his chamber. But the terror of his dream so

wrought upon his spirit that he could live no longer in suspense, but resolved to start that very moment in search of the Princess.

So he leaped from his bed and buckled on his wonderful armour; then he girded his sword Durindana to his side, and taking his heaviest and stoutest lance in his hand, crept down in the darkness to the stables. There he groped his way to the stall of his good horse Gold Bridle, whom he saddled with his own hands; and, leaping upon his back, he rode hastily out of the palace and down through the solitary streets, till he came to the city gate. Great was the sentinel's astonishment at hearing Gold Bridle's hoofs come tramping along through the darkness; but Roland beckoned him to his side, and whispered in his ear: "I am the Count." And when the sentinel heard that, he did his bidding at once, and opened the gate to let him pass.

So Count Roland rode away from Paris by night, and set out alone in quest of Angelica. Many months he wandered north and south, east and west, doing deeds of valour wherever he went; but he could hear no tidings of his Princess, and his grief grew heavier every day. At last he came to Brittany, and found himself on the bank of a river, which he wished to cross; but a flood had lately washed away the bridge, and the water was too deep for fording; so the Count was forced to come to a halt. While he stood there doubting what he should do he saw a beautiful maiden leap into a ferry-boat which lay moored to the opposite bank and row swiftly towards him across the current. At this the Count raised his voice and said: "Fair maiden, of your courtesy prithee give me passage in your boat across the stream, for I am bound on a quest which ill brooks delay." But the lass stayed her ferry-boat at a little distance from the bank and answered: "Sir Knight, the man that would enter my boat must first take a vow to fulfil me a noble enterprise. You must know that Sir Brian, King of Ireland, is gathering together an army to conquer the wicked islanders of Ebuda and put an end to their cruel practices." And then the maiden told Count Roland all about the island of Ebuda, and how every day

a beautiful damsel was offered there as a prey to the ferocious Orc; and she ended by saying: "Now, Sir Knight, if you would cross this river in my boat you must first solemnly promise and vow, upon your honour as a loyal knight, to lend your help to the gallant enterprise of King Brian and endeavour with all your might to put a stop to this horrible custom; and till you have taken such a vow there is no passage for you across the river.

Now when the maiden spoke of the Orc and his daily tale of victims Count Roland grew suddenly pale as death; his very lips were white and dry, and his heart throbbed as though it would burst his bosom. For he thought: "Oh! if my beautiful Princess should have fallen into the clutches of these abominable pirates!" So the maiden had hardly done speaking before he cried out vehemently and said: "I vow! I vow!—upon the faith and honour of a true knight I take the vow; yea, and this very hour will I enter upon the adventure." Then the damsel gladly ferried him over the river; and as soon as they were come across the Count took hasty leave of her, and galloped off at full speed towards the harbour of St. Malo.

There he found a merchant ship just ready to put to sea, which he hired for a great price to carry him to the island of Ebuda. And when he had agreed with the captain he left Gold Bridle on shore in charge of a trusty friend; for he thought: "In this business a horse would be of little service." And when everything was disposed as he desired he went on board his ship and set sail that very afternoon. The breeze was favourable at first, though much too light to suit the Count's impatience; but just as they were off the Land's End it veered suddenly round to the west and blew straight in the teeth of our voyagers. Higher and higher it rose, till it soon became a furious gale, which threatened to capsize them every minute, so that their only hope of safety was to keep their vessel scudding before it. Thus for four days they were driven up the Channel, and through the Straits of Dover, to the coast of the Netherlands; but on the fifth day the wind began to abate, and to their great joy they were able to run

into the harbour of Antwerp. There they beached their ship and began to think about repairing her damages, but they were no sooner come ashore than they saw a white-haired old man issue from a castle which stood hard by and hasten towards the beach. By his dress he seemed the steward of a noble house, but his countenance was heavy and full of care; and when he reached the place where they stood he saluted Count Roland courteously—for he judged him to be chief of the party—and said: "Sir Knight, if you are a brave and courteous cavalier, as your mien bespeaks you, return with me, I pray you, to yonder castle and refuse not to speak with my mistress; for she is a noble damsel of high lineage and great beauty; but alas! she is fallen into very grievous trouble, and sadly needs the counsel of some wise and valiant knight. But if it please you not to come to the castle, at least be content to abide here upon the shore till she can descend and have speech with you at your leisure, for her distress is very sore." At this the noble Roland exclaimed: "Heaven forbid that a damsel in distress should need to come in search of me! Lead me to the castle, old sir, and give me quick admittance that I may speak with your mistress without delay."

The old steward thanked the Count heartily for his goodwill, and led the way forthwith towards the half-ruined castle. They passed over the mouldering planks of the old drawbridge, and through the crumbling gateway, into a large courtyard, the very picture of neglect and desolation, with the rank weeds sprouting unheeded between the moss-coated flagstones of its pavement. There the old man led his guest to the foot of a flight of steps, and said: "Noble Sir Knight, be pleased to mount this staircase, for my mistress sits waiting in the hall: I pray you give her what consolation you can." So Roland went alone up the steps, and passed through a lofty doorway into the great hall of the castle. It had once been a splendid room, where the lords of the place gave audience to all their vassals, or feasted them by hundreds at the great tables ranged along the sides; but now its magnificence was faded quite away,

and the tarnished shields which hung upon its walls looked drearily down upon the phantom scene of bygone pomp. Yet one treasure the desolate old hall still held, fairer than aught that had graced it in the days of prosperity. For upon the daïs at the farther end was seated a lady of marvellous beauty, very sorrowful of countenance, dressed in robes of sombre black, with her rich auburn hair falling in dishevelled masses to her waist, and her deep gray eyes moist and glistening with the tears which she struggled to repress. She sat in a great oaken chair, with her head resting wearily on her hand, so absorbed in melancholy thought that Count Roland had walked half way up the hall before she perceived his entrance. But the clang of his mailed tread upon the pavement roused her at length from her reverie; and rising from her chair she greeted him with courteous grace, and prayed him to be seated by her side upon the daïs.

Then Count Roland made her a low obeisance, and said: "Noble lady, I pray you tell me if I can be of service to you in anything." And the sorrowful lady answered him and said: "Sir Knight, I am truly in a pitiful case, wherein I have great need of your counsel. But first you must hear my story, and thereafter advise me as you think best. Know that I am the Lady Olympia, whose father was Sovereign Count of Holland and lord over much people. Also I had two brothers, very noble and valiant lads, but I was the only daughter of my father, who loved me better than his life, and could refuse me nothing that I chose to ask of him. Now, a few months since it chanced that the young Sir Biron Duke of Zealand passed through our territories and came to visit my father. And when we looked upon each other, straightway love entered into our hearts, so that he became my Knight and proclaimed me his only Lady. Forty days he remained with us, and then departed to fight against the Saracens in Biscay; but first we plighted our troth, and resolved to be married on his return. Alas! he was hardly gone from us when the wicked King of Frisia sent an embassy to my father, saying: 'Send me the Lady Olympia, thy daughter,

that I may wed her to my only son, Prince Aribant.' Now when my father heard this he said: 'Call hither the Lady Olympia;' and I came into his presence, where he sat with the ambassadors of the King of Frisia. Then my father asked me: 'Wilt thou go into Frisia to be the wife of the young Prince Aribant?' But I cast my eyes upon the ground and answered: 'My father, I have plighted my troth to Sir Biron Duke of Zealand, and I cannot marry any other.' So my good father gave rich gifts to the ambassadors and sent them back to their own country. But when the wicked King knew that his suit was denied he was furious with anger, and cried: 'As I live I will punish this Count for his insolence, for I will win his daughter for my son by force.' So he called his knights together, and gathered a great army of soldiers, and made war upon the Count my father. But his chief trust was not in the valour of his knights, nor in any practice of chivalrous warfare, but in a vile and horrible weapon, the like of which was never yet seen in the world. It is a tube of iron closed at one end, within which he puts a certain powder and a ball of lead; then he lights the powder through a very small hole, and the ball shoots forth as the thunderbolt shoots down upon the earth, so that nothing can stand against its passage. With the help of this villainous cannon he twice put to flight the armies of my father, and in each battle one of my brothers was slain by the ball of lead. Then my father shut himself up in his chief fortress and prepared to defend it to the uttermost; but the wicked King brought forth his cannon again and slew him as he marshalled his men upon the ramparts. Thus I was left desolate and alone, and heiress to all the heritage of my father, while the wicked King overran my dominions and practised great cruelties upon my people. But presently he sent again to demand me in marriage for his son, saying that if I consented he would cease from the war and hold me in high honour, but otherwise he would strip me of my inheritance and send me forth a beggar into the world. Now I was still mindful of my plighted troth, and hated the King and Prince of Frisia, who had slain my father and my

brothers. But I had no strength to stand against them, for Duke Biron was far away, and my people were weary of the war. And before my lover could come to my help, my own vassals turned against me and constrained me to make peace with the King. So they promised me in marriage to Prince Aribant, and preparation was being made for the wedding, when Biron appeared at the head of a band of soldiers, and made war on my behalf against my oppressors. Then the wicked King left all care of the marriage to his son and went himself to fight against Duke Biron; and in the very first battle he gained an easy victory; for he scattered the young Duke's soldiers with his cannon, and took prisoner their unhappy chieftain, whom he led back in triumph to the city. But meanwhile a faithful lad, who had been my father's page, found means to slay Prince Aribant, and helped me to flee to this castle, which is all that is left to me of my possessions. So when the King of Frisia returned from his victory he found that I had escaped out of his hand, and his son lay dead within the chamber. Then in his bitter wrath he schemed how he might get me again in his power, to take vengeance on me for the death of Prince Aribant. To this end he shut up Duke Biron, my lover, in a dungeon, and made proclamation that at the end of a year he would put him to a cruel death unless I first surrendered myself to suffer the penalty in his stead. Now, Sir Knight, it is on this matter that I ask your counsel. Think not that I fear to suffer for Duke Biron, for whom I would gladly die a hundred deaths; but the King my enemy is full of treachery, and I fear lest, when he has me in his power, he may refuse to deliver the Duke, and I may have given up my life without gaining the liberty of my lover. Tell me therefore, I beseech you, if you can think of any device to hold this wicked King to his promise, and compel him to deliver the Duke so soon as he has me in his grasp."

With many tears the Lady Olympia told her woful story, which roused such compassion in Count Roland that he cried: "Gentle lady, I am better at deeds than words; but trust your cause to me, and I promise you that all shall

be well." In truth he intended to give her help beyond what she asked of him; for he had no mind that her life should be the price of Duke Biron's freedom, but meant to deliver them both, if the might of his arm failed not. So he suited himself with a stout Flemish charger, in place of Gold Bridle, whom he had left in Brittany, and prayed the gentle Olympia to come with him on board his ship. Then he set sail without delay,—for he was eager to bring this adventure to an end, and start again for the island of Ebuda, — and so came on the third day to Holland. There he left Olympia in the ship, and rode alone to the city of Dordrecht, where the King of Frisia had taken up his abode. And when he came thither and found a great company of soldiers camped within the gate, he called to an archer, and said: "Go to the King of Frisia, and say to him that a knight-errant is waiting at the gate, who challenges him to combat with lance and sword. And these shall be the conditions of the combat; if the knight is vanquished, he shall deliver the Lady Olympia into the King's hand,—for he has left her in a safe place not far from hence; — but if the King is vanquished, he shall deliver Duke Biron out of prison, and trouble him and the Lady Olympia no more."

Thereupon the archer made haste to find the King, and delivered to him Count Roland's challenge faithfully. But the King, who knew neither valour nor generosity, fell straightway to devising a scheme of cunning treachery; for he thought: "If I can get hold of this knight-errant alive, I shall catch Olympia too, and there will be three of them to glut my vengeance." So he summoned thirty of his knights, and bade them leave the city by the opposite gate to that at which Count Roland was waiting, and make the circuit of the walls, so as to take the Paladin in rear. Meanwhile he sent a treacherous courtier to parley with the Count till the thirty knights should be come to their post; and then he himself rode out of the gate at the head of thirty knights more, with whom he attacked him in front. So Roland found himself in the midst of sixty enemies, who rushed upon him at once from every

side. But the felon King left his deadly cannon at home, because he wished not to kill the Count, but to take him prisoner; like a cunning bird-catcher, who preserves his first few victims alive, that their voices may lure others into the net: he calculated, too, that sixty knights would have little trouble in surprising a single opponent.

But no odds could daunt our peerless Roland, and no surprise ever found him off his guard. So when he saw that the wicked King had betrayed him, he laid his lance in rest and dashed into the mass of his enemies. So terrible was his onset, that the lance passed clean through the body of the first whom he met, and stuck out a good half of its length behind his back. The second the Count served in the same fashion, and another, and another, piercing their armoured bodies as a fork may pierce a dumpling of dough; till six Frisians were thus run through the midriff and spitted on a single lance. And as there was no room on it for any more, the seventh received it not in his body, but the point of it struck him under the chin, so that his neck was broken, and he died. Then Roland threw away the lance and its six corpses, and drew forth Durindana from the scabbard. Woe to the enemy who came within reach of that wondrous sword! each cut, each thrust, was death to the knight who encountered it, for Roland never struck a stroke in vain.

Soon the King repented bitterly that he had left his cannon at home, and shouted to his knights that one of them should go and fetch it. But they were all much too frightened to pay any heed to his orders. And when the King saw that they were all stricken with panic, he too made haste to escape, and rode towards the city gate; but the Count was there before him, and the terrible Durindana barred his passage. Then the King turned and fled round the walls, and Roland hastened after him at full gallop. Oh for five minutes on the back of Gold Bridle! the war would soon have been ended, if Roland could only have come up with his arch-enemy! But his stout Flemish horse was somewhat slow of foot, so that the flying King gained distance every minute, and soon escaped into the

city by the farther gate, which he ordered to be shut behind him.

He galloped to his palace and fetched out his deadly cannon; and when he had loaded it, he returned with it to find Count Roland. Soon he saw him pursuing the beaten knights round the walls; so he posted himself in ambush outside the gates, and waited for the Paladin to pass. And when Roland came within shot, he put the match to the touch-hole; and with a roar like thunder and a flash as of lightning the leaden ball sped forth on its errand of destruction. But whether the King was over-eager to kill his enemy, or whether the fright which the Count had given him made his hand shake and his eye uncertain, at all events the bullet missed its aim, and only killed the Flemish charger which Roland was riding. Quick as lightning the Count leaped from off the fallen steed, and rushed towards the King's hiding-place; and in great terror the traitor vaulted into his saddle and fled away from the face of the Paladin. But now Roland did better on foot than he had before been able to do on horseback; for running at full speed he pursued after the King with Durindana drawn in his hand. And he was so fleet of foot that he very soon came up with his enemy and clave him from head to waist with a single blow. Thus the wicked King of Frisia died in the midst of his treacheries, and the Lady Olympia was delivered from the fear of her enemy.

And at the same moment a cousin of Duke Biron's appeared before the city at the head of a mighty army, which he had assembled to deliver the Duke. So Roland and he attacked the Frisian garrison; and the Dutchmen of the city, who were weary of the wicked King's tyranny, rose up against their oppressors, and helped to drive them out of the land. Thus Duke Biron was delivered out of prison and from the fear of a cruel death, and the gentle Olympia was once more lady over the heritage of her fathers.

CHAPTER II.

HOW DUKE BIRON PROVED FAITHLESS AND ROLAND DELIVERED OLYMPIA THE SECOND TIME.

When the Frisians were all got out of the way and the city had become tranquil again, Count Roland and Duke Biron rode down together to the place where the Lady Olympia was awaiting the issue of the combat. Little had she imagined, when she first asked the stranger knight's advice, that he would utterly defeat her wicked enemy and deliver herself and her lover; and all day she remained on board his ship in great anxiety, fearing that he would fall a victim to the murderous cannon, and that her state would then be worse than before—for she knew not that it was the peerless Count Roland who had engaged to fight her battle. But oh! how deep was her joy when in the dusk of the evening she saw her champion return to his vessel with Biron riding safe and sound by his side! In a transport of gratitude she would have thrown herself at Roland's feet, but he prevented her, and placed her in the arms of her Duke.

Long into the night they sat communing together, telling each other of all the hardships and misery that they had borne; but in the morning they left the ship again, and rode all together back to Dordrecht. There they were heartily welcomed by all the Dutchmen, who were overjoyed to see their rightful lady once more; all the bells were set merrily ringing, flags were hung out of every window, and fifty fat oxen were roasted whole in the city square; there was such shouting too, and huzzaing from all

the men and boys, with such crying for joy among the women, that it seemed as if the town had gone mad with delight; and when night came on again the whole country-side was ablaze with innumerable bonfires. Without loss of time the lovers were solemnly betrothed with stately pomp and ceremony in the presence of Count Roland and Duke Biron's faithful cousin, and of all the chief citizens of Dordrecht; but the completion of their marriage was delayed for a while, because they wished it to take place in Biron's own province of Zealand. Meanwhile the Lady Olympia made over the government of her territories to the Duke, and he appointed his cousin to rule them in his name, after he should have departed to his own country.

Now, as soon as all these ceremonies were done, Count Roland took leave of Biron and Olympia, and returned on board his ship; for he counted every minute as lost which kept him away from the island of Ebuda. Before he departed, however, the Dutchmen of the city came to him and said: "Sir Knight, by your valour you have delivered us from sore oppression; wherefore, we pray you look upon the spoils which we have taken from the King of Frisia, and choose from them whatsoever pleases you." But Roland answered: "Nay, for I war not for mine own profit, but only that I may execute justice in the world. Therefore, I will take neither silver nor gold, nor anything which men count riches; but I will take the wicked King's cannon, with the powder and balls that belong to it, and will sink them in the depths of the sea, that the world may be rid of so monstrous an engine for ever." The Dutchmen were well pleased that the Count demanded nothing but the cannon, for they said: "There will be all the more to share among ourselves." So they chuckled over their good luck as they kept the gold and silver, the precious jewels, and the richly-chased suits of armour, which they divided among themselves; but Roland carried off the cannon, with its whole stock of powder and balls, to his ship.

The same afternoon he weighed anchor and sailed westward away upon his journey; and when he came to the

middle of the German Ocean he heaved the cannon and ammunition overboard into the sea, crying: "Lie there, thou monstrous new-fangled weapon, where no man shall ever discover thee! For even a coward may kill his enemy by craft from a distance, but the brave man prevails in the press of combat where the spears are shivered on the buckler and the keen swords crash upon the helmet." So the deadly gun sank to the bottom of the ocean, where it lay for full five hundred years; and there it would be lying still but for the malice of a cunning enchanter who hated all the race of men, and sought only how he might plague and destroy them. With this intent he wove a powerful spell, which caused the iron tube to rise again to the top of the waves, and float as if it had been made of cork to the shore. There the enchanter seized it and showed men how to use it in their battles; he taught them too to make others like it, and to cast bullets, and manufacture gunpowder, as the King of Frisia had done before, so that they might slay each other by thousands at a time. And thus it happened that the good intentions of the peerless Count Roland came to nothing, and men gave up the knightly exercises of lance and sword to learn musketry drill and artillery practice in their stead.

Roland, however, sailed forward on his voyage, thinking that the world was quit of cannons for ever. But very soon the wind became contrary again, so that he could make no way against it, but drifted about the coast of England and Scotland, biting his lips with impatience to arrive at Ebuda. And while he is tossing about we must go back to Holland for a while, and see what became of Duke Biron and the Lady Olympia.

Surely if ever a knight was bound to love and cherish his lady, shielding her from harm and sorrow with all his might, and devoting his every thought to further her happiness, Duke Biron was above all men bound so to love and cherish Olympia. For his sake she had borne grief and suffered injustice; for him she had lost her noble father and her brave young brothers; for him she had been robbed of her possessions and driven forth an exile from

her territories. Well might the young Duke doubt whether his utmost love and care could ever reward her enough for her faithful devotion! Alas! in the hour of happiness he proved himself unworthy of his gentle lady. For though strong of arm and brave enough in battle or adventure, he was light of heart and fickle of purpose; and after remaining faithful to his love through peril and adversity, he fell away from her in the time of his prosperity. And his treachery befell on this wise. When the Frisian garrison fled away from the city of Dordrecht they left behind the only daughter of their King, a blue-eyed little maiden not more than sixteen years old, alone and helpless in the midst of her father's enemies. There Duke Biron found her stretched upon the dead King's body, weeping as though her heart would break, and tearing her flaxen locks for sorrow. She was not nearly so beautiful as Olympia, but her fresh childish face won the fickle Biron's heart, and made him forget the noble lady to whom he owed so deep a debt of gratitude. With tender caresses he raised her from the ground, and strove to comfort her in her misfortunes, saying that he would take her with him into Zealand, and marry her to his younger brother; but really he had fallen in love with her from the first moment of their meeting, and intended to marry her himself as soon as he could get rid of his betrothed. The gentle Olympia, who was ever full of pity for the unfortunate, and had no suspicion of her lover's treachery, encouraged him in his pretended purpose, and welcomed the poor little Princess as though she were her own sister. And all the people said: "See how noble of heart Duke Biron is, who protects the innocent daughter of his enemy!" In this way the young Duke won praise of all men for his counterfeit goodness, while really he was planning the most wicked perfidy.

Very soon, however, he found an opportunity of showing himself in his true colours; for he ordered a ship to be made ready to carry him back to Zealand, on which he embarked two days after Count Roland's departure. With him went Olympia, to whom he had just been so solemnly betrothed, and the little Frisian Princess, as well as a few

nobles of Holland, who were invited to be present at their Lady's wedding. But they had hardly put out to sea before they encountered the same contrary wind that was delaying the Count's voyage; and they were so buffeted about by the sea that they were thankful to make for the shelter of a little desert island, off which they came to an anchorage about the time of sunset. There Olympia, who was tired out with her stormy voyage, entreated to be put on shore for the night, saying: "You can spread me a tent on the beach, where I shall sleep better than on board the ship; and in the morning we will continue our journey." So they put up a tent for her as she desired; and thither she went to take her rest, while Biron and all his company remained on board the vessel.

But a little after midnight, while the gentle Olympia was still sleeping on the shore without a suspicion of harm, the faithless Duke woke up the captain and crew of the ship, and commanded them to weigh anchor immediately, threatening them with instant death if they refused to perform his bidding. So they were compelled to obey him; and though the wind was still high and the sea rough, they sailed noiselessly away from the island, and left the unhappy lady to her fate.

Poor soul! she slept on peacefully till the light of the rising sun shining into her tent awoke her. Then she rose from her bed and dressed herself in haste; and when she was ready she stepped out of the tent, meaning to signal for a boat to come and take her on board the ship. To her horror no ship was in the roadstead; but far away to seaward she saw the white sail above the waves, looking no bigger than a sea-gull's wing against the sky. How can I tell you all the misery of her heart at such a moment? At first she could not believe that her lover had really deserted her, but thought that the ship must have slipped her moorings and been driven out to sea during the night, and would even now be beating back to take her on board. Was not the sail growing larger and larger as she looked? Alas! it grew smaller and smaller, as the ship sailed farther and farther away, till it dwindled to the merest speck, and

then vanished for ever from her gaze. Then indeed the wretched Olympia knew all the depth of her misery; then she knew that all her sufferings for Biron's sake had been endured in vain, and that her pure and noble love for him had been utterly thrown away. With bitter tears she exclaimed against his cruel treachery, and lamented the hardness of her fate; and with terror she thought that she was doomed to die of starvation on this island, whereon was no man to help her. But very soon she was threatened with a worse death than that which she dreaded. For in the afternoon some pirates from Ebuda, who happened to be cruising in those seas, and had run short of provisions for their boat, came to shoot wild-fowl on the island. These men, when they saw the beautiful Olympia sitting alone and helpless on the shore, cried: "A prize! a prize for the Orc!" and seizing her in spite of her entreaties, they bound her hand and foot, and carried her away with them in their boat.

Seven days she was forced to sail with them over the sea; but on the eighth day they brought her captive to their own land, and shut her up in prison for the night. And as they had no other prisoners at that time, they appointed the morrow for exposing her to be eaten by the Orc. So the next morning two men took her from her cell, and led her away, surrounded by a great company of women and girls, to the sea-shore, where they bound her fast to the rock, just as they had formerly done with Angelica, and so left her to await the monster's coming.

But help was nearer at hand than poor Olympia dared to hope. For Roland, after being driven far out of his course by unfavourable winds, had got to his destination at last, and was preparing to perform the promise which he vowed to the maiden of the ferry-boat. This very morning, before the sun was well risen, he had brought his ship to an anchor off Ebuda, just out of sight of the fatal rock to which the islanders were chaining their victim. And as soon as the ship was made fast, he called the captain, and said: "Lower me the smallest of your boats and put in it the biggest anchor and the strongest hawser that you can

find among your stores; for I think to make good use of them, if I can come to close quarters with the Orc." And when they had done as Count Roland bade them, he clothed himself in his armour, and slung Durindana at his side; but he took neither lance nor battle-axe nor any weapon of assault save his sword alone. Thus equipped he let himself down into the boat, and taking the sculls into his hands, rowed himself swiftly round the point, till he came within sight of the fatal spot.

Then he looked about him, and saw a maiden chained to the rock; but he was still so far off that he could not discern who she was, and a cold shudder ran through him at the thought that this might indeed be none other than his beautiful Princess. Straining every nerve, he sculled swiftly towards the place; but just as he came opposite, a frightful roar was heard on the other side of him, as the hideous Orc raised itself above the waves, and seemed to gather the whole sea beneath its huge ungainly breast. Now when the monster saw the Count rowing just in front of its prey, it rushed open-mouthed towards him, thinking that to-day it would get double rations for breakfast; but this was exactly what Roland had expected, and, like the wise man that he was, he had planned his measures well beforehand. So he waited quietly till the Orc had actually sucked him up, boat and all, into the vast cavern of its mouth; but the moment he found himself inside, he snatched up the great anchor which he had brought with him, and stuck one point of it firmly into the monster's tongue. Then with a scream of pain the Orc tried to snap its jaws together; but the other point of the anchor caught its palate, and stuck there so firmly that the brute could neither shut its mouth closer nor open it wider. Then did Count Roland draw forth Durindana from the scabbard, and begin stabbing the Orc about the mouth; and the great monster was as powerless to defend itself as the garrison of a city, after the enemy has mastered its walls and towers. Presently, however, the creature dived with its head beneath the waves; whereupon the Count floated out of its mouth with one end of the hawser wound about

his body, while the other was fastened to the anchor. Then he swam as fast as he could to the shore; where he seized the hawser in both hands, and pulled at it with all his might. And so great was his strength, that the Orc being now spent with loss of blood, had to let itself be hauled ashore; just as a salmon, after many rushes and struggles, has to follow the line at last. Thus the horrible monster was pulled in, and died upon the beach; and surely, you would think, all the people of the island welcomed the peerless Count Roland as the noblest of benefactors.

Not a bit of it! In their silly superstition they believed that the Orc was a god, whose death was a terrible calamity; and so, instead of falling down at Roland's feet in thankfulness, all the men in the place set upon him with every weapon they could lay hands on, doing their utmost to slay him in requital for the deliverance he had wrought for them. But Durindana soon cleared a passage through this senseless rabble; and while they were fleeing in all directions from the terrible blade a mighty cry arose from the centre of the island. For while Roland was battling with the Orc, King Brian of Ireland had landed on the opposite coast, and was wasting all the land with fire and sword. But when he heard how the sea-monster had been hooked and slain, he cried: "Surely the peerless Count Roland is here; for no other knight could perform so wondrous a feat." So he hastened to the sea-shore, while all the people were scattered from before him; and finding the Count there, he greeted him with great joy, having known him for many years at the great Emperor's court, where he was nurtured.

Then at last Roland had leisure to look at the maiden whom he had saved: and what was his astonishment when he beheld in her the Lady Olympia! But still greater was his indignation when she told him of Duke Biron's treachery, and of all the miseries she had suffered. At last, however, this gentle lady was destined to find true and lasting happiness, fit to make her amends for all her sorrows. For King Brian was so moved by her beauty

and by the story of her misfortunes, that he fell in love with her on the spot, and lost no time in embarking his army and sailing straight to Zealand. There he encountered the traitor Biron, and slew him with his own hand; after which he returned and married the Lady Olympia, crowning her Queen of Ireland, as well as Lady over her own County of Holland. And you will be glad to know that King Brian and Queen Olympia lived happily and prosperously together for the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ANGELICA NURSED MEDORO AND SOON AFTERWARDS MARRIED HIM.

COUNT ROLAND soon found that Angelica was nowhere in the island of Ebuda, but he could not learn for certain whether she had ever been there, because the islanders who had exposed her had no notion who she was. They could only tell him that some time before a knight, who rode upon a flying horse, had rescued one of the maidens from the rock and carried her off through the air in the direction of France. Hoping that this rescued maiden might prove to be his beautiful Princess, the Count returned immediately on board his ship and steered for the French coast. And when he came to St. Malo again, he took Gold Bridle from the hands of the friend with whom he had left him, and mounting on his back set out once more upon his weary search. Now what perils he endured and what feats he performed during the next few weeks nobody can tell, because he was journeying quite alone, so that no record has been kept of his actions. For Roland himself never spoke of his own prowess, and all his gallant deeds that we know about were told by the friends who saw him do them or the grateful people whom he assisted; a few of them, too, were narrated by the enemies whom he conquered, and whose generous admiration for his valour made them glad to record even their own defeats by so peerless a champion.

The next thing that I have to tell you about him is, that he actually got a glimpse of Angelica for a moment, and it

happened in a strange manner. For one day he was riding through the wood in which Atlas had built his enchanted palace, when the cunning old wizard lured him into his trap, and set him to searching fruitlessly about the precincts, as he had done to Roger and Bradamante and so many other noble knights. And it chanced that on the same day the Saracen chief Ferralu, whose name you may remember as another of Angelica's lovers, was also decoyed into the palace, and went hunting up and down it in company with the peerless Roland; but neither could recognise the other because of the enchantment of the place. While they were thus wandering, however, who should enter the garden but the beautiful Princess Angelica herself, wearing on her finger her magic ring, which she had recovered from the courteous Prince Roger. Of course this magic ring overcame the enchantment of the place, so that Roland and Ferralu both knew her the moment she came in sight, and spurred towards her at full gallop. But Angelica had no mind for their company, so she turned her palfrey's head and fled away from them as fast as she could go. Thus she fled, and they went galloping in pursuit of her, till all three were far beyond the enchanted precincts; but then Angelica, finding that the two knights gained upon her at every stride, slipped the ring off her finger and into her pretty mouth, and so instantly disappeared from their view.

At this both Roland and Ferralu were utterly dumbfoundered; but as the Princess was no longer to be seen, they had leisure to recognise each other. And when they knew each other they instantly resolved to fight, seeing that there was an ancient quarrel between them. For not only were they rivals for the love of Angelica, but Ferralu had the impudence to claim the helmet which Count Roland always wore, and had vowed that he would wear nothing on his head till he could obtain it. He therefore went bareheaded; and Roland, who was too noble to take an enemy at a disadvantage, said: "Sir Ferralu, since you have no helmet, I also will fight bareheaded; and let the conqueror take this casque of Hector which I wear."

So he took off the wonderful helmet and hung it to the

branch of a tree, and then the two knights began their battle. Very fierce was their encounter, and terrible were the blows they struck; for Ferralu, though he was not the equal of Roland, was yet a knight of great skill and undaunted valour, who could not be conquered in a moment. But just as he was beginning to get the worst of it, he was saved by a fresh freak of the invisible Princess Angelica, who had remained close by her lovers all this while, enjoying their astonishment at her disappearance. And when she saw them fairly set a-fighting for Roland's helmet, the thought came into her foolish head that it would be a good joke to run away with this prize of their battle and hide it, at least for a time, from both of them. So she took it down from the bough to which the Count had fastened it, and rode swiftly away with it through the forest, laughing in her sleeve at the success of her silly and mischievous prank.

She had not been gone five minutes before Ferralu happened to glance up at the bough, and perceived that the wonderful helmet had disappeared. Thereupon he reined back his horse, and cried: "Sir Count, we waste our labour in this battle, seeing that the casque for which we strive is no longer here." At this Count Roland stayed his hand from the battle, marvelling where his helmet could be; but he supposed that some false knight must have passed by the place and taken it away while he and Ferralu were too busy to see what was happening. So he answered: "Certainly we must first recover the casque of Hector, and afterwards we will renew our battle to determine which of us shall wear it." They rode therefore side by side through the forest, till they came to a place where three roads met. There Count Roland turned to his adversary and said: "Sir Ferralu, here we must separate, since we know not which path this thief has taken. Go you therefore to the left and I will take the right-hand road; for thus one of us will surely come up with the object of our quest." So they separated at the parting of the ways, and the Count rode along the path to the right, which brought him presently to a new adventure, as I will tell you in the next chapter.

But the Saracen Ferralu took the left-hand road, and had hardly ridden a mile along it before he found the wonderful helmet lying right in the middle of the way. For Angelica had soon grown tired of carrying it, and let it fall where Ferralu now found it. Then the Saracen rejoiced greatly that his good luck had brought him the prize, which he never could have won by his valour; so he buckled the helmet on his head and rode off gaily to the camp of King Agramant.

Meanwhile the beautiful Princess Angelica remained in the forest indeed, but so close to the edge of it that she was not above a couple of miles away from the headquarters of the Saracen army. Nevertheless she feared nothing, because with the help of her ring she could make herself invisible whenever she chose. Now all this time the siege of Paris was going on, and there were frequent sallies on the part of the Christians, and skirmishes between them and the Saracens, besides three or four great pitched battles, about which I shall have a great deal more to tell you later on. Well, in one of these great encounters it chanced that the Christians had much the best of it, and Raynald the Paladin, who was bringing the English and Scotch armies to the help of Charlemagne, slew a young Saracen chieftain named Prince Dardinel. This young Prince's death was bitterly deplored by the whole Saracen army; but they were so utterly defeated that day that they could not even recover his body, but were forced to flee within their lines and leave it on the field of battle. Prince Dardinel, however, had been followed to the wars by a faithful squire named Cloridan and a page called Medoro, his friend, a beautiful boy not yet twenty years old, but who already gave promise of future valour. These two were caught in the stream of flying Saracens, and drawn with them into the lines of the camp; but when night had put an end to the struggle, young Medoro turned to his friend Cloridan and said: "It is a shame that our noble Prince should be left unburied on the field. Behold, it is now night, and the Christians, secure of their victory, are keeping careless guard; let us go now together and search by the

moonlight for our lord, that we may bring back his body to the camp, and bury him as befits his rank." Cloridan looked with admiration at his friend, marvelling that a mere boy should display such bold fidelity, and strove at first to turn him from his purpose, showing him all the dangers of such an enterprise. But Medoro answered: "I would rather die than make no effort to bury the body of my Prince;" and Cloridan, finding his friend so resolute, said he would willingly share in the attempt.

So they went both together to the field, and made search among the heaps of slain, till they came at last to the body of Prince Dardinel. With many tears they raised it in their arms, and had borne it half way back to the camp, when they were surprised by a party of Scotch soldiers, who had followed the noble young Zerbin, their Prince, to the battle, and were now returning with him from pursuing after a band of routed Saracens. At the sight of them Cloridan cried: "Leave the body, Medoro, and follow me for your life;" saying which, he dropped his part of the burden, and fled into a neighbouring copse, thinking that Medoro would surely do the like. But the boy still clung to his Prince's body, and bore it slowly and with difficulty to the copse, where he tried to hide himself with it among the trees. Alas! the Scotch soldiers had already surrounded the place, being resolved to make prisoners of the two Saracens; and Medoro soon fell into their hands. Prince Zerbin, however, was as generous a knight as ever lived, and promised to spare his captive's life; when Cloridan, knowing nothing of what had happened, returned to look for his friend. And seeing Medoro in the enemy's power, he posted himself in concealment behind a tree, and drawing his bow sent an arrow through the nearest Scotchman's brain. Another arrow and another he shot, and each one took the life of an adversary, till the Scotchmen waxed wild with rage and bewilderment, for they could not see whence this slaughter proceeded. And one of them, thirsting to avenge the death of his companions, disobeyed Prince Zerbin's orders, and pierced Medoro through the breast with a lance; so that the poor boy fell fainting, and

to all appearance dead, upon the ground. At this Cloridan, beside himself with grief, leaped out from his hiding-place, and rushing into the midst of his enemies, he bared his breast to their swords, and so fell dead beside the body of his friend. Then the Scotchmen, having accomplished their vengeance, rode away to their own camp, thinking that Medoro, as well as Cloridan, was certainly slain.

Fortunately, however, Angelica happened to pass by the place a few minutes afterwards; and attracted by the beauty of Medoro's countenance, she stooped over him to see if he were really dead. The poor boy lay in a pool of his own blood, which had flowed from the wound in his breast; his face was ghastly pale, and his eyes closed as if in death; but the life was not utterly gone out of him, and the Princess felt his heart still beating feebly in his bosom. In those warlike old days there was frequent need of nursing, so that all noble ladies knew something of the physician's craft; and Angelica was especially expert in all arts of healing and tending the sick. So she hastened to tear open the lad's doublet and stanch the blood which still trickled from the ghastly wound; then she cut off a strip from her own gown, and bound it round his breast for a bandage; after which she bathed his face and hands till he came to himself again, and persuaded him to suck the juice of a certain herb, which she knew to be a medicine of great virtue. And this precious herb performed such wonders that Medoro soon began to recover his strength, and declared that, though he was still too weak to walk, he could get along very well on horseback. Only he would not quit the place till he had buried the bodies of Cloridan and Prince Dardinel, and as yet he had no strength for such a task. Luckily at that moment a kind-hearted old shepherd drew near, riding on a sturdy forest pony, from which he gladly dismounted at the request of the beautiful Princess. Then he buried the Prince and his squire, and raised a mound above their grave, which he covered with fresh turf; and when this was done he lifted Medoro into his saddle, walking himself at the pony's head, while

Angelica rode her palfrey as before. They journeyed slowly and by easy stages, because Medoro was still very weak from his wound; but on the third day they arrived without accident in the valley where the good old shepherd had his dwelling.

There they sojourned happily for several weeks with the old man and his wife; and the Princess would help the dame in her dairy, while Medoro took his turn at pasturing the flocks and herds. For, thanks to Angelica's skilful nursing, the boy quickly recovered his strength, and his beauty waxed greater every day. And to cut a long story short, the lovely Princess Angelica, who had disdained the homage of the peerless Count Roland, and turned up her nose at half the kings and princes of the world, now gave herself up to the love of this humble page, and could hardly be happy out of his sight. Every evening they would go together to an arbour, which they had built by the side of a beautiful spring, and sit hand in hand talking of their love, and planning their future happiness. And as soon as Medoro was quite well, Angelica took him for her husband; after which she thought it was high time for them to quit the happy valley, and travel over the seas to India. So, as she had come to the end of all her money, she took from her arm a magnificent bracelet of gold, which Roland had given her long before, and bestowed it on the good old shepherd as a recompense for all the kindness he had shown her. Then she set out with Medoro, and journeyed safely to the port of Marseilles, where they embarked on board a ship, which carried them safe to India. There she crowned her husband lord over all her wide dominions, and they reigned happily together for many years, and had plenty of children as beautiful as themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ROLAND FOUND ISABELLA IN A CAVE AND RESTORED HER TO PRINCE ZERBIN OF SCOTLAND.

LITTLE dreaming that the haughty Angelica would ever take it into her head to marry a simple page, Count Roland pursued his journey along the road which he had taken when he separated from Ferralu. And for three or four days he rode along it without meeting with any notable adventure, hoping always to achieve the recovery of his helmet, and to get at least another glimpse of his Princess. But when neither the one hope nor the other seemed likely to be fulfilled, he made a halt in the first town through which he passed and bought himself a brand new helmet, which he judged to be a good serviceable headpiece enough, though far inferior to the famous casque of Hector which he had lost. His purchase made, he rode away again on his faithful Gold Bridle, and spent several weeks journeying hither and thither through all the provinces of France.

One day he was passing not far from Paris, when he fell in with two squadrons of the Saracen army, each led by a king of great renown. The first of these kings was Manilard, a chieftain old in years, but still eager and intrepid in battle, and much esteemed by King Agramant as a counsellor of excellent wisdom. The other was the young King Alzird, as bold and lusty a knight as any among his fellows; but rash and headstrong, as is the manner of youthful warriors. Now, when this gallant young king saw the peerless Roland approaching, he knew not who he was, but

by his appearance he judged him to be a knight of great prowess. This was enough to make Alzird eager to encounter him; so challenging him from afar off, he laid his lance in rest, and spurred his charger forward to the attack. Better had it been for him to have stayed quietly among the knights whom he led; for Roland came thundering against him on Gold Bridle with such a shock that he drove the point of his lance through the heart of the rash young king, who fell dead without a struggle to the ground. Then from both squadrons of the Saracens rose a piercing cry of rage and grief; and rushing all at once against the Count, they strove to avenge their chieftain's death. Thick as hail upon the roof the strokes of sword and mace rained down upon the helmet and armour of Roland; but he no more heeded all this rabble of adversaries than an old wolf who has leaped into the middle of the sheepfold is daunted by the numbers of the huddling flock. Bare in his hand gleamed the terrible blade which had so often wrought havoc among the Saracen hosts; and to tell the true number of those who now fell beneath it were a task almost beyond the power of man to accomplish. The whole roadway soon ran red with blood, and was cumbered with the innumerable corpses; for each stroke of the fatal Durindana was the death-blow of one foeman at least, and neither casque nor coat-of-mail could avail to stay its progress. So suddenly did stroke follow stroke that very soon the Saracens who survived began to turn in flight; friends stayed not to succour their friends, nor brother sought to bear his brother company; but all fled helter-skelter away, seeking every man his own safety; some on horseback and some on foot, without looking whether the way was smooth or rough before them. Only the aged King Manilard held his ground, deserted by all his followers. He would have been too prudent to begin a combat against a knight whom he recognised by the majesty of his mien to be none other than the peerless Count Roland; but when once the battle was fairly joined he was too valiant a knight to turn his back. Now therefore he accounted it better to die with honour than to save himself by shameful flight, and so

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pressed gallantly forward to assail the Count. And his good fortune rewarded him for his bravery by saving him from what seemed certain death; for it chanced that Durindana turned in Roland's hand as he struck, so that, instead of cleaving through the old King's brain, the Count smote him with the flat of the sword upon his helmet. Thus King Manilard's life was saved; but so terrible was the blow he received that he fell stunned from off his saddle and lay motionless as though he were slain upon the ground.

This completed Roland's victory, for the rest of the Saracens were fast escaping in all directions; so he thrust back Durindana into the scabbard, and started off to continue his wanderings. After journeying westwards for several days, he came one evening after sunset to the foot of a high mountain, and looking up its side he was much astonished to see a light issuing from a cleft in the rocks. Thinking that Angelica might possibly have made this her hiding-place, he rode up the side of the hill, and found that the narrow cleft formed the entrance of a large and lofty cavern. In front of it grew a tangled mass of shrubs and brambles, so that it would have been quite invisible by day; but now that all around was dark the firelight from within streamed through this screen of bushes and betrayed the grotto beyond them. Seeing the nature of the place, the Count easily guessed what sort of men would make it their habitation; but as he wished to be certain of the matter, he fastened Gold Bridle's rein to a bush, and pushed his way through the brambles and into the mouth of the cavern.

Descending a flight of rough-hewn steps, he soon found himself on the floor of the grotto, where he saw a sight which surprised him greatly. In front of the fire which was kindled on the middle of the floor sat a young and beautiful damsel, apparelled in robes now torn and ragged, but woven of the finest stuffs and still covered with the remnants of rich embroideries, such as only princesses are wont to wear. She seemed about seventeen years old, and though her eyes were dim with weeping, giving sure token of the grief that weighed upon her heart, yet her countenance was so fair

and lovely that the light of it seemed to illumine the grim cavern as though a ray from Paradise had struck it. On the other side of the fire stood a hideous old crone, with a wicked, wrinkled face, who seemed to have been quarrelling with the lovely maiden; but she held her tongue at Roland's approach, wondering what could have brought a knight of such goodly aspect to this grotto.

Roland saluted both the women courteously, and they returned his salutation, after which he turned to the damsel and said: "Tell me, I pray you, fair maiden, who can have been so outrageously brutal as to shut up your gentle person in the depths of this living tomb?" This question seemed to renew the damsel's grief, so that for some minutes she was unable to speak for sobbing; but presently she choked back her tears, and answered: "Sir Knight, perhaps it were wiser in me to tell you nothing, seeing that this wicked old crone will certainly inform my gaolers of all that I say to you, and then I shall be chastised for my talking. Nevertheless, I will answer your question, and reveal to you the whole truth, that, if you are unable to assist me, at least one loyal knight in the world may know what grievous wrongs I suffer. I am called Isabella, and till lately I was a great Princess, being only daughter to the Saracen King of Galicia; but now I am fallen from my high estate to be the slave of a band of robbers, who make this cavern their den. All this I suffer through my love for a noble young Prince, whom once I hoped to call my husband, but who is now lost to me for evermore. For about a year ago, while there was yet peace between Christians and Saracens, my father proclaimed a tournament to be held in Bayonne, the fame whereof drew many knights from divers countries to visit our land. Now of all this gallant company young Sir Zerbin, Prince of Scotland, seemed to me the most perfect in courtesy and valour, and when I saw his bearing in the jousts, where he won the prize from all opponents, my admiration was kindled to love, so that I desired none other than him for my husband. The gallant youth returned my love with equal fervour, and desired above everything to make me his wife; but my father forbade our

marriage, saying that he would never suffer me to wed a Christian. Now, when we found that there was no hope of turning the King my father from his decision, we resolved to escape together by stealth, to the end that Zerbin might take me into Scotland and marry me there. But presently the war broke out, and Zerbin was forced to return home before we could execute our plan, being summoned by Raynald the Paladin to lead his father's troops to the succour of the Emperor Charlemagne. So with many tears we parted for the time; but he promised that he would send a trusty friend to carry me off from my home and take me by sea to Scotland. And well did he keep his promise, for a few weeks afterwards a gallant ship appeared off our coast, commanded by Odoric of Biscay, the faithful friend and comrade in arms of my Prince. Meanwhile I had taken up my abode in a palace by the sea-shore, and one night I contrived to escape from my attendants and make my way to a boat which was waiting for me on the neighbouring beach. Thus I fled to Odoric's ship, and as soon as I was on board he weighed anchor and sailed northward away for Scotland. Oh! how happy I felt at the thought that I should soon be the wife of Zerbin. But fortune flattered me a while with false hopes only to overwhelm me with more terrible disappointment; for off the coast of La Rochelle we encountered a fearful tempest, which drove the ship upon the rocks and wrecked it with all that were on board, of whom only Odoric and I were able to save ourselves in the boat. In the wreck I lost everything that I possessed; but little I cared about gowns and jewels when my life was saved to make my loyal Zerbin happy. Alas! this was only the beginning of my miseries. For the robbers who inhabit this cavern had espied the wreck from a distance, and hurried down to the beach to seize upon whatever might be washed ashore. There they came upon Odoric and me, and called to us to surrender ourselves prisoners; but the faithful knight resisted them, defending himself and me gallantly against them. All his efforts, however, proved of no avail; for they overcame him by force of numbers and slew him, and led me away captive to

this cavern, where they have kept me ever since in bondage. At first they treated me kindly, because they saw that I was richly dressed, and hoped to obtain a great ransom for me; but now they have learnt that my father has been slain in the wars and that there is no one willing to pay the price of my liberty—for they are afraid to apply to my lover;—wherefore they now use me cruelly and despitefully, and threaten to sell me to a slave merchant, who will carry me away to Persia. Woe is me! I have renounced all hope of ever seeing my Zerbin again, and I pray only for death that it may deliver me from the terror of slavery."

Her pitiful story ended, poor Isabella burst afresh into tears; but Roland comforted her, saying: "Fear not, noble Princess; henceforth I will be your champion, and I hope that all may yet be well with you." The words were hardly out of his mouth when the captain of the robbers entered the cave followed by the twenty scoundrels who formed his band. His countenance was the most repulsive that you can imagine; for in his bloated face there was only one eye remaining, and that one had a horrible squint; the other had been put out long since by a sword-stroke, which had cut away a piece of his nose and left an ugly scar across his jaw. This monstrous-looking villain, seeing the Count seated by the side of Isabella, cried out to his followers: "Here is a gay bird caught without the trouble of spreading a net!" And turning to Roland, he said: "My dainty sir, you are come hither just in the nick of time; have the goodness to take off that excellent suit of armour of yours, which will suit me, I think, to a nicety. Your doublet and hose, too, will come in handy to replenish my wardrobe, which happens to be rather ill stocked just at present. So please to make haste and strip yourself, and then we will talk about your ransom, for I fancy you have run your head fairly into the noose." Saying this he uttered a diabolical laugh; but Roland answered with a bitter smile: "I will sell you the armour under such a bargain as no merchant ever stipulated;" and catching up a great log from the fire, he smote the villain full on the forehead. The burning brand put out the sight of the robber-captain's only remain-

ing eye, and, not content with blinding him, broke right through his skull into the brain, and laid him dead upon the floor of his own cavern.

This was not enough for the Count, who was resolved to rid the world of the whole troop of bandits. So seeing in the cavern an enormous table, some eighteen inches thick and very long and wide, he seized it in both his hands, and flung it with all his force into the middle of the band. Like a rock which a peasant hurls from above upon a swarming brood of vipers, the great table crashed among the throng; some it crushed to death outright; some had a leg and others an arm broken by the blow; and in short, out of the twenty bandits thirteen lay dead or dying under its weight. The other seven tried to escape through the narrow entrance; but Roland was too quick for them, and taking advantage of their panic he disarmed them all in a trice, and bound them firmly with a coil of rope. Then he dragged them out of the cavern, and to the foot of a great tree that grew hard by, from the branches of which he hanged them all by the neck, and so made an end of as rascally a crew as ever infested the earth. But the wicked old crone, when she beheld the ruin of her accomplices, fled shrieking out of the grotto, and left Count Roland alone with the lovely Isabella. Finding herself thus delivered from the brigands, the fair damsel protested that she would follow her preserver whithersoever he chose to lead her; only she besought him not to leave her alone, lest some new misfortune should befall her. And the Count willingly promised her his protection, saying that he hoped they might fall in with Prince Zerbin before very long, but till then he would take care that she came to no harm. So when morning came, Isabella mounted the dead robber-captain's horse, and accompanied Roland in his wanderings.

After journeying together for some time, they came one day in sight of the castle which had belonged to the traitor Pinabel, whom Bradamante had lately slain, as I told you in a former chapter. Now this was just a week after Pinabel's death; and when Roland and Isabella drew near

the place, they saw a great crowd of men and women streaming forth from the castle gate, in the midst of whom walked a prisoner with his hands bound tight behind his back, and his head stooped sorrowfully on his breast. But what was poor Isabella's horror when in this prisoner, who was evidently being led forth to death, she recognised her lover Prince Zerbin! He it was indeed; for an enemy had falsely accused him to Count Anselm, the father of Pinabel, as the murderer of his wretched son. Believing this false witness, Anselm had taken the young Prince in an ambush, and condemned him to be slain on the spot where the traitor Count's body had been found. But when Roland understood the matter, he shouted to the crowd: "Unbind this noble knight, and disperse to your homes, lest a worse thing befall you." And when the people paid no heed to his command, he shook up Gold Bridle's rein, and dashed into the midst of them; where he made such slaughter, first with his lance and afterwards with the terrible Durindana, that the rabble soon left their prisoner in the roadway, and fled screaming back into the castle. Then the Count unbound the young Prince's hands and restored to him his horse and armour; after which he left him to escort the lovely Princess Isabella, and bidding them an affectionate farewell, rode forth alone upon his journey.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE PEERLESS COUNT ROLAND FOUGHT WITH PRINCE MANDRICARD AND WENT MAD FOR LOVE OF ANGELICA, AND HOW ZERBIN'S LOYALTY COST HIM HIS LIFE.

WITH hope growing fainter and fainter every day Roland continued his search for Angelica; but presently he found to his surprise that a Saracen knight had been riding up and down the land in search of him. This was the Tartar Prince Mandricard, the most ferocious warrior in all the Saracen host, who had sworn to follow Count Roland over the world till he had avenged the death of King Alzird and his company. For the aged King Manilard, on recovering from the stunning blow which the Count had dealt him, made his way to the camp of King Agramant; where he narrated how a single knight, who could surely be no other than Roland himself, had routed the two squadrons with terrible slaughter, killing the rash young Alzird together with some hundreds of his followers. Thereupon the ferocious Mandricard blazed out in wrath, and swore to take vengeance on the Count, with whom he had yet another cause of quarrel. For the good sword Durindana had formerly belonged to King Agrican, the Tartar Prince's father; but Roland had won it from him many years ago, when he slew him in single combat. And Mandricard was so vexed that a stranger should possess his father's wonderful blade that he had vowed to wrest it from the Count and to wear no sword at all till he could do so. With this double quarrel to settle, Prince Mandricard mounted his horse and rode alone out of the Saracen

camp. Here and there along the road he came upon wounded soldiers, who had dragged themselves with difficulty away from the scene of the encounter; and presently he arrived at the very place where the greater part of the two squadrons had been slaughtered. There he stood fairly amazed to behold the number of the slain and the depth of their wounds, which testified to the marvellous strength of their conqueror; and after gazing upon them a while with strange envy of Count Roland's prowess, he left them and resumed his journey.

The next day he came to a green and shady meadow, which was almost surrounded by a great bend of the stream that watered it, so that it formed a peninsula with a very narrow isthmus for entrance. In this meadow were pitched a number of tents, the largest of which was made of silken curtains; and a captain with a company of soldiers was keeping guard on the little isthmus. Riding up to this captain, Mandricard asked him who were his companions, and to what end they were here assembled; and the captain answered: "Sir Knight, we are bidden by our lord the King of Granada to accompany the Princess Doralis his daughter, whom he has promised in marriage to Rodomont the mighty King of Algiers. At present she is sleeping in yonder tent to escape the noon-day heat; but when the cool of the evening comes on, we purpose to continue our journey, and to-morrow we hope to conduct the Princess to her father in the Saracen camp." Hearing this, Mandricard was seized with a desire to behold the Princess Doralis, since the fame of her great beauty had reached him; and turning to the captain he said: "I have a desire to come to speech with your lady; lead me therefore into her presence, or else ask her to come hither immediately, for I am bound on a journey which brooks no delay." The captain shrugged his shoulders, and only said: "You must be mad to think of such a thing;" but the ferocious Prince laid his lance in rest, and pierced him through the middle of the body. Then he drew out his lance from the corpse, and laid it in the rest again, crying: "Who dare bar my passage?" And when the other soldiers pressed for-

ward to resist him, he spurred into the midst of them, and slew a goodly number before his stout lance broke. But when at length it split in half, he grasped the butt end of it in both hands and used it like a mace, killing or stunning an opponent at every blow. The soldiers defended their post manfully till two-thirds of them had fallen beneath the spear; but then the remnant fled away, and left the passage free to the Tartar Prince. Entering the meadow, he found the Princess Doralis leaning against the trunk of a tree, to which she had run when the noise of battle startled her from her slumber; and her eyes were streaming with tears, which she shed half in grief for the slaughter of her soldiers, half for fear of what might happen to herself. Still greater grew her terror as she beheld the ferocious Mandricard advance towards her; but when the Tartar looked upon her beautiful face, which was justly reputed the fairest in all the realms of Spain, his only thought was to profess himself her knight, entreating her to forget her betrothal to Rodomont, and consent to be his lady. And as Doralis had never had much love for the King of Algiers, Prince Mandricard prevailed so well that, partly won by admiration of his prowess and partly yielding to her pleasure at his avowal of love, she presently agreed to accompany him on his quest, allowing him to hope that she would marry him as soon as an opportunity should occur.

So she mounted her palfrey and followed him; and after journeying together for two or three weeks they fell in at last with Count Roland. He had dismounted from Gold Bridle to take an hour's rest, for the heat of the midday sun oppressed him, and was lying at full length upon the grass by the side of a beautiful fountain, shaded by the interlacing boughs and dense foliage of a grove of ilex-trees. But when he heard the tramp of horses approaching he started to his feet and buckled on his helmet in haste; then, seeing that Mandricard came on fiercely as though eager to challenge him to combat, he leaped into the saddle and sat ready to defend himself against him. Mandricard, meanwhile, rode close up to him, and cried: "Surely thou art he who lately routed two great squadrons of Saracens,

and slew King Alzird their leader; for thou wearest the armour borne by the knight who did that deed." And when Roland answered, "I am he," Mandricard added: "Art thou not also Count Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne?" And Roland answered again: "I am he; but what doth it concern thee to know who I am?" "It concerns me much," exclaimed the other wrathfully, "seeing that I have a double cause of quarrel against thee. For I am Mandricard the Tartar, who have sworn to avenge the death of King Alzird my friend; and moreover, I am the son of King Agrican, whose sword thou wearest, having slain him disloyally and with treachery; for well I know that thou couldst not have prevailed against him otherwise." At this Count Roland could endure no longer, but shouted: "Thou liest, Sir Mandricard; for I slew thy father righteously and in fair fight, and that will I prove upon thy body. But with what weapons shall we fight if our lances chance to break without advantage to either of us?" And the Tartar answered: "Behold, I have no sword, because I have vowed to wear none till I recover Durindana out of thine hands. But care not for that; seeing that I hope to pierce thine heart at our first encounter with the lance." The noble-hearted Roland, however, would take no such advantage over his enemy, but unbuckled Durindana from his side and hung it from the branch of a tree, saying: "Of a truth thou art presumptuous enough; but it was never my wont to fight with any man save on equal terms. The sword, therefore, shall hang on the tree till our battle be over, and let the victor take it for his guerdon."

Then they laid their lances in rest, and galloped about half a bowshot apart; and, wheeling at that distance, they struck the spurs into their chargers' sides, and rushed to encounter each other at full speed. Each aimed at the bottom of his adversary's visor, and each lance struck full and true; nevertheless these mighty warriors blenched not a whit, but each sat as firm in his saddle as if nothing heavier than an acorn had hit upon his helmet. Yet so tremendous were both their strokes that the oaken lances

snapped short in the middle, and the ends flew up many feet into the air, striking the branches of the trees above them. Their lances being thus broken in twain, the knights grasped the remaining halves in both hands and belaboured each other with them as Robin Hood's merry outlaws used to do with their quarter-staves in Sherwood Forest; but neither seemed a whit the worse for the other's strokes, and their strange clubs soon splintered to pieces without either being able to claim any advantage. Thus they were left without any weapons, and you would suppose they might surely have cried quits and gone upon their several ways; but no, they fell to buffeting each other with their gauntleted fists, till all the grove re-echoed with the clang of the smitten mail. Each champion's arm descended on his opponent's body with the force of a sledge-hammer striking the anvil; yet neither could claim to have the best of this extraordinary boxing-match; and after several minutes of equal fight the Tartar Prince lost patience altogether, so he suddenly flung his arms round Roland's body, and strove with might and main to drag him from the saddle. But the Count sat firm and upright, seeming as if he and Gold Bridle were carved out of one solid block of marble; only, perceiving that his enemy's attention was fully taken up with wrestling, he quietly stretched out his arm and loosened the bridle from the head of the Prince's charger. Bit and bridle fell together to the ground unheeded by Mandricard, who still tugged and strained at Roland, while the Count sat motionless as before. But though this tremendous strain could not shake our Paladin in his seat, it very soon proved too much for his girths, which fairly split away from the saddle. With his feet still firm in the stirrups and his knees still pressing the saddle-flaps, Count Roland was dragged from off the back of Gold Bridle, and the clang of his armour as he fell to the ground was like the crackling of thunderclouds that burst straight overhead. This fearsome noise frightened the Tartar charger out of his senses, so that he gave a great leap into the air, and rushed headlong away as fast as his legs could carry him; and as his bridle had fallen to the ground Prince Mandricard had no power

to control his flight, but was borne over hedges and ditches far away, with Doralis following after on her palfrey as best she could.

The gallant Gold Bridle knew his duties better, for though his mettle was every whit as high as that of the Tartar steed, he had been more thoroughly trained to his work, and had greater intelligence to perform it. So he stood stock still by the side of his master, who jumped to his feet in a moment, none the worse for his tumble, and set to work to stitch his girths in their place again. As soon as he had managed this he saddled his horse anew, and looked about him to see if there was any sign of Mandricard returning to continue the struggle; but finding that the Tartar Prince was nowhere within sight, he took down Durindana from the bough and hung it again by his side; then he vaulted on Gold Bridle's back and rode away out of the shady grove.

He tried to follow Mandricard's track, hoping to come up with him and fight again with better luck; but the Prince's horse had taken so wild a course, galloping for a long way over hard rocky ground, that Roland soon lost his trace, and spent two whole days attempting in vain to recover it. On the second evening he found himself on the banks of a stream as clear as crystal, which was bordered by luxuriant meadows of fresh green pasture, adorned with many beautiful trees. On the trunks of the trees the Count noticed everywhere the letters A and M cut in every imaginable shape; but he only thought that some shepherd lad had been carving his lass's initials and his own. Little did he dream that the course of his wanderings had brought him to the very valley in which the beautiful Princess Angelica had nursed and married Medoro. Presently, however, he noticed two hearts united by a love-knot cut in the bark of a poplar; and going nearer to examine them, he saw in one of them the name "Angelica," and in the other "Medoro," deeply and beautifully graven in the wood. At this his heart gave a great throb of anguish; but even yet he could not believe that his lady was the Angelica in question. "It must be some

other Angelica," he said to himself; "some shepherd's lass, as I supposed at first. Yet Angelica is not a likely name for a peasant." Very soon, however, his doubts were at an end, for he entered the arbour on the hillside which the Princess and her page-lover had built. There he saw strewn about the floor innumerable sheets and scraps of paper, the greater part of which were covered with verses in Angelica's hand-writing, and told of her passion for Medoro; how she scorned the homage of all other suitors and found happiness only in his company. When the unhappy Roland had read two or three of these poems and recognised beyond a doubt the hand of his Princess, he cast himself on the ground in an agony of rage and despair, gnashing his teeth and beating with his clenched fists upon the floor. Yet once again he had a ray of hope, for the thought struck him: "It may be that this 'Medoro' is only a name imagined by my lady; perhaps even she uses it as a surname for me." And taking comfort from this thought he searched diligently through the papers, if haply he might light upon anything to confirm his idea. Alas! he only found what destroyed it altogether; for he came across a sonnet in a different hand-writing, and signed "Medoro," composed in celebration of their marriage, and telling in plain terms how the beautiful Princess Angelica had preferred a simple page before all the kings and princes of the earth. When he read this the Count dashed the hateful paper to the ground, and rushed frantically out of the arbour; and leaping on Gold Bridle's back he galloped him furiously down the valley, neither knowing nor caring whither he went.

But by-and-by, perceiving that it was fast growing dark, and seeing a cottage close at hand, he thought he might as well pass the night there as anywhere else, since all places seemed alike to him in his misery. So he entered the cottage, and asked if he could have a lodging for the night; where, as ill luck would have it, he was welcomed by the very same old shepherd who had harboured Angelica and her husband. This good old man, noticing that the Count looked moody and sad, thought to divert him from his

melancholy by narrating the story of his former guests; and to confirm the truth of his tale he produced the golden bracelet which the Princess had given him in recompense of his services. Too surely did Roland recognise the jewel, which he himself had won at a great tournament and given to the fickle Angelica; and, unable to endure the sight of it, he burst wildly out of the cottage, and mounting Gold Bridle again, galloped back to the fatal arbour. This he utterly destroyed, breaking down its walls and tearing up the wooden flooring, and then, spent with grief and toil, he threw himself down upon his back, and lay stiff as though he were dead upon the ground. Three days and three nights he lay there in a kind of trance without moving hand or foot; but when he arose on the fourth day, his senses were utterly gone from him, and the peerless Count Roland was become a raving madman. In his frenzy he dashed aside his helmet and wrenched asunder his wonderful armour, then he tore off his doublet and all his garments, stripping himself naked to the skin; and wrenching up a young pine-tree by the roots, he bore it in his hand for a club, and rushed leaping and shouting down the valley. This was the beginning of the great madness of Roland, which has been much celebrated through all later times, and which deprived the Emperor Charlemagne of his bravest Paladin's help at a time when the Christians could ill spare a valiant champion.

A few hours after this lamentable misfortune had befallen the Count, it chanced that Prince Zerbin and his lovely Isabella entered the valley and rode towards the place where the arbour had formerly stood. There they beheld a surprising sight; Roland's cuirass lay in one place, his greaves in another, and his helmet in a third; some distance off they found Durindana fallen out of the scabbard, while Gold Bridle stood in the midst of all this confusion with his head bent sorrowfully down as though he knew that his master was in evil case. Great was the astonishment of Zerbin and Isabella, and much they marvelled what so strange a sight might mean; they could have believed anything sooner than that Roland had been seized with madness,

yet they could not suppose that he had been slain, since there was no drop of blood to be seen. But presently they were joined by the old shepherd, who had witnessed all that had happened, and informed them accurately of everything. Then they made great lamentation, but resolved to do what they could in honour of the Count their preserver. So they gathered all his arms together and laid them at the foot of a tree, placing Durindana on the top of the heap, after which Zerbin carved in the bark: "These are the arms of Roland;" as who should say, "Let no man touch them who is not able to stand against Roland in battle."

Then they turned to depart, when lo and behold! Prince Mandricard appeared upon the scene, furnished with a new bridle, and accompanied by Doralis as before. Seeing the heap of arms and reading the inscription above them, he joyfully caught up Durindana and girded it to his own side, when Zerbin cried out to him: "Touch not these arms at your peril, for they belong to the peerless Roland, who is now suffering the affliction of madness." Hearing this, Mandricard demanded to know more of the matter; and when he understood it, he said: "Mine verily are these arms and this sword, for the possession of which I lately fought with Count Roland. For the time, indeed, an accident parted us without advantage to either; but now I perceive that the Count fears to meet me again, and has stripped off his arms and feigned madness in order to escape me." With these words he stretched forth his hand to take the rest of the armour; but Zerbin, moved by loyal devotion to Roland, exclaimed: "Thou art a thief if thou layest hands on the arms of Hector thus!" Then without more ado they addressed themselves to battle, since the Tartar would not renounce his claim, nor Zerbin be false to the interests of his deliverer. And bravely did the young Scotch Prince bear himself, trusting in the righteousness of his cause; but he was no match in fight for Mandricard, who now wielded the terrible Durindana. Still for a long time he contrived to remain unscathed, now turning aside his enemy's blows with his shield, now making his charger swerve to avoid them with marvellous dexterity. At last,

however, Durindana pierced the tempered mail of his breast-plate, and dealt him a deep wound on the chest; and still Mandricard rained down blow on blow, till poor Zerbin was like to faint and fall from his horse. Then in great distress Isabella turned to Doralis, and besought her to stay the battle; and Doralis, who was kind of heart, persuaded her ferocious lover to be content with his victory and leave his noble adversary alive. So Mandricard rode away, taking Gold Bridle and Durindana and the wonderful armour as the spoils of his victory, and leaving Zerbin to be tended by his gentle lady.

Alas! it was already too late to save the life of the loyal young Prince, who was bleeding from eight wounds, of which the least was deep and dangerous. He could no longer sit on horseback, but lay at full length upon the grass with his head in the lap of Isabella, who wept as though her heart were breaking, and lamented bitterly that she had been spared from the shipwreck to suffer this greater sorrow. But Zerbin comforted her, saying: "Grieve not overmuch, my heart; only love me after I am dead even as thou hast loved me in my lifetime. Truly one thing only troubles me, that I leave thee without stay or protection in the world, else would I deem myself happy,—yea, the cup of my joy would be full, in that it is granted me to meet death thus with my head upon thy breast." At this the mournful Isabella, bending down her tearful face, and pressing her lips to his, drooping like the rose not gathered in its season, but left to wither on the leafy hedge, answered: "Nay, my love, not so; think not to take this last journey without thy bride. Together we will quit the earth; together we will reside for ever." And as she said this the loyal Prince Zerbin breathed his last; and at the same instant his faithful Isabella's heart broke for sorrow, and she fell dead beside the dead body of her beloved.

PART III.

ASTULF.

CHAPTER I.

HOW ASTULF CONQUERED A GIANT AND KILLED A MAGICIAN.

Of all the Paladins of France who fought for the great Emperor Charlemagne, the strongest of body, the bravest in fight, and the noblest in all knightly virtues, was the Emperor's nephew, the famous Count Roland, now, alas! become a raving madman, as you heard in the last chapter. But of all the rest none surpassed, and very few could equal, the jovial English Duke Astulf, whom we found a while since transformed into a myrtle bush by the magic of the wicked fairy Alcina; and in that form he would have ended his miserable life but for the kind enchantress Melissa, who had no sooner seen Roger well on his way out of the fatal city than she went through all the wicked fairy's kingdom and liberated the noble knights who were bound there by her hateful spells. First of all she came to Duke Astulf and freed him from the enchantment, and did her work so well that he not only appeared in his own shape again, but was stronger and handsomer than he had ever been before. Then she went into the palace, which Alcina had left empty when she followed Roger, and found the Duke's good armour that lay tumbled among the lumber; she found, too, his golden lance made long before by the wise Argaglia, who had enchanted it so cunningly that it unhorsed every knight whom it struck, and none could stand against it. Astulf, however, knew nothing of this enchantment, but thought that all his victories in the lists were due to his own prowess, and that he would have done

just as well with any other stout lance; and so I daresay he would, for he was a very valiant knight. The armour and the lance Melissa gave back to Astulf, who received them with great joy, and thanked the kind enchantress a thousand times while he buckled on the mail and balanced the well-known bar of gold in his hand. Then they went to Alcina's stables and took the best horse they could find, and so, after Melissa had freed all the other knights, came safely to the kingdom of Logistilla. Right glad was the good fairy to see the famous Paladin, and received him with great honour, and kept him for two days with Roger and the other knights in such noble and pleasant entertainment as no other queen, not even among the fairies, could give. Then, as soon as she had sent Roger back to France upon the Hippogrif, she bade her people make ready the best of her ships to take Astulf far upon his way beyond the power of the wicked Alcina; and calling him to her, she gave him much wise counsel and two presents of great price to help him in all dangers that might beset him. The first present was a wonderful book in which were written all the enchantments and spells that ever were or ever would be practised in the world, and after each spell was the way in which it could be overcome; so that whoever had this book in his hand need never be afraid of magic any more. And the second present was a marvellous horn, the sound of which was so harsh and terrible that whoever heard it, though he were the bravest warrior or the wisest magician upon earth, must needs clap his hands to his ears and run as if he were running for his life. These presents Queen Logistilla gave to Duke Astulf, who then took leave of her with a thousand thanks and much courteous reverence, and went on board the ship that she had prepared for him.

Safely the good ship went over the sea, and carried the English Duke over many thousand leagues of water and by the shore of many strange and rich countries, till at last they came to the Persian Gulf and the eastern coast of Arabia. There Astulf took leave of the captain and those who had accompanied him, and mounting his good horse Rabican, journeyed through all Arabia, till he came to the

land of Egypt and the banks of the great river Nile. Now Rabican was the most wonderful horse in the world, for he was the son of Flame and Wind; he needed no oats or hay to nourish him, but fed upon air alone; and though he galloped so swiftly that he left the winds and the lightning behind him, yet his tread was so light that not a flower was bruised by his touch and no trace of his passage was left in the softest sand. You may suppose that with Rabican to carry him Astulf wasted no time by the way, but travelled as far in a single day as you or I could go on the best hunter in England in a month.

He was no sooner come to the right bank of the Nile than he turned Rabican's head to follow the course of the stream along the bank, but stopped short when he saw a ferry-boat put off from the opposite shore and make straight for the point where he had halted. In the boat was a venerable old hermit, who rowed swiftly across the river, and as soon as he came near enough to be heard cried out to Astulf: "Ah! my son, if you would save your life come now in the boat with me and pass over to the other bank; for the road by which you are travelling will lead you straight to your death. Less than six miles along it lives a terrible giant, full eight feet taller than the tallest man in the world, who lets no knight or traveller pass his house, but hacks in pieces all who try to pass along that road. And no man can escape him be he ever so brave and strong, for this giant, whose name is Caligorant, has a marvellous net large enough to cover an acre of ground, woven of steel threads so fine that no eye can see them, and yet so strong that force cannot rend or sword cut them. In this net he catches all who try to pass along the path, and when he has cruelly killed them he eats their flesh and drinks their blood, and then throws out their bones into the desert; and he spares neither noble knight nor humble merchant, nor even the most beautiful ladies, but treats them all alike. Hasten, then, my son, and come into the boat with me, for if you cross not over the river certain death is before you." The tears were in the good old hermit's eyes as he spoke; but Astulf, who cared no more

for giants than a well-bred fox-terrier cares for a fox, answered him boldly, and said: "I thank thee, reverend father, for thy counsel, but it suits not with the quality of a knight to prefer life to honour. Seek not to persuade me to cross over the river, for I am minded to go straight to this giant's den and see if I cannot rid the world of so foul a plague; and if I die there will be but one knight less in the world, but if I conquer thousands will be saved from the cruel toils of the monster. Hinder me not, therefore, for never shall it be said that Astulf failed in the duty of a loyal knight." So the old man blessed him and bade him go in peace, and Astulf departed to fight against the giant Caligorant.

The road led along a narrow strip of sand, with the swift river on the one side and a deep black marsh on the other; and right in the middle of the road the giant had built his house, so that only a narrow path just wide enough for a horse to pass freely was left on either side; and just beyond the house the net which no eye could see and no strength could break was spread all across the road. All around lay the heads and bones of murdered men, and Caligorant himself stood before the door of his house with a huge knotted club in his hand, and laughed a fiendish laugh as he saw Astulf come riding along in the distance. "Ha! ha!" he laughed to himself, "here's luck for me at last, and high time too! Three months to-morrow since last a knight jumped into my pretty little web, but now here's a fine big dinner for me coming riding along. Ho! ho! ho!" and still chuckling to himself, the abominable monster began slinking along the edge of the road next the marsh, thinking that he would slip round behind Astulf, and then by screaming and brandishing his great club at him would so frighten him and his horse that they would rush full tilt past the house into the net. But Astulf saw what he was after, and thought: "Aha! my big brute, now's the time to see whether you or I can make the more terrible noise;" and before the giant could get behind him he put his wonderful horn to his lips and blew such a blast that all the shutters of the house rattled and the chimneys shook

and the peewits in the marsh flew away as fast as their wings could carry them, and never stopped flying till they came to Perthshire, where they remain to this day. And if you don't believe me, just take a walk some summer afternoon from Lochearnhead to Killin, and when you get well through Glen Ogle turn to your right across the moor, and if you don't find there a hen peewit sitting so close upon her nest that she looks like a bunch of moss, and will let you stroke the soft feathers on her back without getting up to fly away, why you will have either worse luck or duller eyes than I had three or four summers ago. But when you have found her, mind you only touch her gently, gently, and don't startle the poor thing or drive her off her nest, for she has been so terrified once in her life by Astulf's horn that it would be a shame to frighten her any more.

Caligorant no sooner heard the sound of that terrible horn, than with a great scream of terror he turned tail, and rushed away back as hard as he could tear. And he was so out of his senses with fear that he never so much as thought of where he was running, but went clean past his house, and plunged head foremost into the very net which he had set for Astulf. Into it he plunged, and down he fell with a great thud upon the earth, and the fine steel meshes closed round him so tightly that, hard as he tried to struggle, he had to lie quite still upon the ground, and could move neither hand nor foot. Right glad was Astulf to see the monster caught in his own trap, and he leaped down from Rabican, and drew his sword, and ran to cut off his ugly head, and rid the world of him for ever at one blow. But when he saw him lie there helpless at his feet, the noble knight took scorn to slay a man who could no longer defend his life; and though the wicked giant by his murders and cruelties had well deserved a hundred deaths, yet Astulf, now that he had him in his power, generously gave him his life. But he had no mind to leave him at liberty to be again a terror to all Egypt; so taking the chain which fastened one end of the net to the ground, he first tied the giant's hands behind his back, and then bound the chain tightly round his arms and body, so that, struggle

and twist as he might, he could in no way set himself free. Then with great trouble he disentangled his huge limbs from the close invisible meshes, and set him on his feet; but the net he rolled up and strapped upon Caligorant's back, and hung there too his own helmet and shield, that he and his good Rabican might have the less weight to carry on their journey; and so, leading the conquered giant in triumph behind him, he came that afternoon to the great city of Cairo.

There all the people flocked to meet him, and see the huge Caligorant in chains; and great honour they paid to the brave Paladin who had rid them of so terrible a monster; they besought him also to stay with them for a while, and promised him joyous entertainment and rich gifts. But to this Astulf would not agree, for he wished to journey down the Nile to Damietta, where there lived a terrible magician, who roamed all over Egypt murdering men and women, burning their houses, and plundering their goods.

Orrilus was the magician's name; and he was the son of a goblin and of a wicked fairy, who had cast such a spell over him at his birth that any wound which he received healed itself at once; and though he were hacked into a hundred pieces, the fragments would join together again, and his body would be as sound and strong as before. So that no one need hope to kill him, or even to hurt him, without first finding out how to conquer this strange enchantment; indeed many noble knights had already lost their lives in fighting against him, and the fear of him was great through all the land. But when bold Duke Astulf heard of him and his evil deeds, he vowed that such a villain should plague the world no longer. So with his book and his horn slung at his saddlebow, and the great giant Caligorant lumbering along behind him, he set out from Cairo, and took the road to Damietta.

When he arrived there, he found two knights already fighting against the magician; and by their arms he knew them to be the twin-brothers Grypho and Aquilas, sons of Oliver the Paladin. These two brothers journeyed every-

where together; and thay were so like one to the other in face and bearing that but for the difference in their armour their own father could not tell them apart. But Grypho wore a suit of snow-white mail and rode a snow-white horse, while the armour and horse of Aquilas were as black as the blackest jet. Brave young knights they were, and many deeds of valour they had done against the Saracen enemies of the great Emperor; but now against the magician Orrilus they could prevail nothing, but were rather in peril of their own lives. For though Grypho split the magician's skull through to the teeth, and though Aquilas clave his body from shoulder to waist, the wounds healed up again as soon as they were made, and Orrilus only came on the more fiercely to the attack. At last Grypho in great rage swung his sword round over his head, and struck Orrilus such a blow upon the neck, that his head was cut clean off from his body, and went rolling away along the sand. But Orrilus cared never a rap for that, but ran after his head and caught it up, and stuck it upon the neck again, where it grew as tight as before without so much as a scar to show that it had ever been cut off. Loud laughed Duke Astulf when he saw the robber-magician chasing his own head along the shore, and calling to the two noble youths, he bade them put up their swords and stand aside, for he would soon bring the enterprise to an end. Orrilus was willing enough to leave the other two and fight against Astulf; and indeed he would have cared nothing though all three had come against him at once, so confident was he in the power of the spell which charmed his life. But Astulf, as he jogged along on Rabican from Cairo, had been reading in his Book of Spells—you see dictionaries *are* of use sometimes—and this is what he found in it:

"ORRILUS.—A robber and magician, of Damietta, in Egypt, who flourishes at the present day. He bears a charmed life, so that all wounds inflicted on him heal instantly, and do him no harm."

And then in the next paragraph:

"*N.B.*—The charm lies in one of the hairs of his head; and when this is cut off at the skin, the spell will be broken."

This was very satisfactory so far; but Astulf would have liked to know more exactly which of all the hairs was the charmed one, and whether there was any difference of colour or texture to distinguish it from the rest, or at least in which part of the magician's head it grew; but the book said nothing of this. However, the first thing to be done was clearly to get hold of the head. So Astulf drew his sword and rode up to Orrilus, who was brandishing his great mace in the air and calling to him to come on and be pounded to a jelly, and a terrible battle began between them. Many a hard stroke did Astulf strike, but Orrilus always warded them off his head; now the Duke cut off a finger, now a hand, now a whole arm with the shoulder to boot, but the magician picked them up and stuck them on again in their places, and was never a whit the worse. But at last, as he was stooping to pick up one of his pieces, Astulf caught him a blow full on the neck, as Grypho had done before, and the great head fell down upon the sand and rolled right under the feet of Rabican. Off jumped the Paladin in a moment, and caught up the head by the hair, and was back again in the saddle before Orrilus well knew where he had been hit. Then he put spurs to his horse, and went scouring over the sands like the wind with the magician's body following him as fast as it could tear, and trying to call out "Stop, thief!" but it could not utter a word, because the Duke was galloping off with its mouth. And if Astulf had been riding any horse but Rabican, the body would certainly have come up with him, but not even the Swift Runner in *Grimm's Stories* could keep pace with the son of Flame and Wind. Meanwhile Astulf, as he rode, was looking all over the head to see if any one of its hairs was different from the rest, but for all that he could see one was exactly like another all the head over. Then he bethought him that his good sword was as sharp as a razor, and would shave the head even without any soap as clean as a French dog-fancier shaves the coat off the hind-quarters of a poodle; so he clutched tight hold of the nose, and scrape, scrape, away came whole patches of hair from the scalp, and he had not got half over the head when whish!

the good sword cut the fatal hair clean off at the skin. Then the hideous face grew suddenly pale and livid in his hand, and the body which was just now running so swiftly fell full length upon the sand, for the spell was broken and the wicked robber Orrilus was no more. Thereat there was great joy throughout all Egypt; but Astulf, with Grypho the White and Aquilas the Black, went on his way to Palestine.

CHAPTER II.

HOW GRYPHO WAS CHEATED BY A WITCH, BUT MADE THE PEOPLE OF DAMASCUS LAUGH ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THEIR MOUTHS; AND HOW AQUILAS AVENGED HIS BROTHER.

Of the two ways which led into Palestine, one was easy and comfortable for travelling; but it was the longer of the two. The other was across a desert country, where there was little water to be found and less food; but the three Paladins decided to go by it, for they wished to hasten to the help of the Emperor, and to lose as little time as possible by the way. But as they had no mind to starve in the desert, they took some of the treasure which they found in the house of Orrilus, and bought a great barrel of wine, big enough to last them over a fortnight, and a sack of dates and other dried fruit that weighed as much as Grypho's white horse, as well as a quantity of other things which they thought would be of use on the road. All these they slung upon Caligorant's back, and the great giant tramped along with them just as easily as before; for in fact he was strong enough to have carried the Tower of London with all the armour and Crown jewels in it, and a Beefeater or two into the bargain.

In those days Palestine had not yet fallen into the hands of the Saracens, but was wisely and justly governed by Sansonet of Mecca, a very valiant young man skilled in all knightly practices, whom Count Roland had converted to Christianity some years before, after which he approved himself so brave and prudent that Charlemagne created

him a Paladin of France, and appointed him his lieutenant to rule over all Palestine. Sansonet, who was just now busy fortifying all his strong places for fear of an attack by the Caliph of Egypt, received Astulf and the sons of Oliver with great joy, and lodged them magnificently in his own palace: and Astulf, seeing what he was doing and that there was a scarcity of labourers for the works, made him a present of the giant Caligorant, who could carry as big a load of stones in a single journey as half a dozen horses and carts could bring in twenty; he gave him, too, the wonderful net of steel which had been so useful to him in taking its owner prisoner. And Sansonet in return gave Astulf a rich and beautiful sword-belt, and a splendid pair of spurs with buckles and rowels of pure gold, which were said to have been the very spurs worn by St. George when he fought the dragon and saved the King of Egypt's daughter. The intention of the Paladins was to take ship as soon as possible in one of the ports of Palestine or Syria, and so go by sea all the way to France; and Sansonet, when he heard how Charlemagne was hard pressed by the Saracen armies, declared that he would appoint the wisest and most faithful of his vassals to govern for a while in his stead, and would accompany the others to the help of his liege lord. But before they could do as they proposed there happened an incident which kept them all in Asia longer than they either wished or expected.

There lived in Constantinople a young witch named Origille, who was one of the most beautiful women in the world, but as wicked at heart as she was fair to look upon. This Origille had cast such a spell over Grypho by her beauty and her witchcraft when he and Aquilas were at Constantinople some months before, that he vowed that he would be her knight and she should be his lady; and he never rested till he had got her to promise that she would marry him and follow him about the world wherever he went. Origille made no great difficulty about promising what he asked of her, and the very next evening gave him a philtre which made him more in love with her than ever; for in her vanity she was well pleased that Grypho should

wear her colours, which he always carried to victory in battle or tournament; for he was stronger and braver than any of the knights at Constantinople. But in her evil heart she hated the bold young Paladin, and would rather have lost all her power over him than be compelled to keep her promise by marrying him. So when he and Aquilas had to go off to Egypt, Origille pretended to be so ill that she could not leave her bed; but the brothers were no sooner out of the way than she got up as well as ever she had been in her life, and soon afterwards married a vile knight of Antioch as wicked as herself, and the greatest coward and most treacherous villain in all the country. All this Grypho heard while he was still sojourning with the others in Palestine from the mouth of a Greek pilgrim, who told him also that Origille and Martan her husband were now on their way to be present at a splendid tournament which Noureddin King of Syria had proclaimed to be held at Damascus. Poor Grypho was wild with rage at such evil news, and determined to go straight to Damascus and wreak vengeance on the man who had robbed him of his lady; for his love for Origille, thanks to her potions and philtres, was as strong in him as ever. But he was ashamed to tell his brother of his plan, since Aquilas was wiser than he in this matter, and had often reproached him for throwing away his love on such a vile woman, and had done all he could to make him leave and forget her. So Grypho started off without his brother, which he had never done before in all their lives, and putting spurs to his white horse galloped alone along the road to Damascus. Six days he travelled thus, and on the seventh day came in sight of the great city; when lo! in the distance whom should he see but Origille herself magnificently dressed in a robe of blue with fringe of gold, mounted on a cream-coloured palfrey, and accompanied by the false knight Martan, who rode at her side in great state followed by two pages who bore his shield and helmet. Burning with rage, Grypho spurred towards the party; but Origille had long before seen his white armour glancing in the sunlight, and guessed with what intent he came to meet her. Well she knew

that if it came to blows her craven husband was no match for the valiant Paladin; so she plotted cunningly with Martan how to deceive the brave youth and bring him again into her power. With a look of gladness on her face, though inwardly she was trembling with fear and hatred, she galloped forward to meet him, and reproached him lovingly for having stayed so long away from her, vowing that she had been so miserable without him that she had determined to set out in search of him, and had persuaded her brother Martan to bear her company till she should find him. And so great was her power over the bewitched young knight that he was silly enough to believe all that she said, and saluted Martan affectionately as her brother, and so, instead of punishing his betrayers, as he had intended, rode pleasantly with them into Damascus.

The next morning the city was all astir to witness the great tournament, which was to be the most splendid ever held in all Asia, and to which had gathered knights and ladies from all the kingdoms round; drums and trumpets sounded in every quarter to warn the knights that it was time to arm themselves and hasten to the lists, and all the streets were crowded with a countless throng of horses and chariots, which made the walls ring with the echo of their hoofs and wheels upon the pavement. You may be sure that Grypho was not the last to don his snow-white armour and mount his beautiful charger; and the false-hearted Martan rode at his side, and came with him to the great square, in the centre of which were marked out the lists for the jousting. In the galleries were gathered beautiful ladies, who threw down flowers of every colour to their knights below; and on a splendid throne of ebony and ivory sat the King Noureddin armed from head to foot, and wearing over his armour a rich tunic woven of the finest silk, and so embroidered with threads of gold and studded with pearls and precious stones that all the money in the Bank of England would not have been enough to buy a single sleeve of it. The prize of the tournament was a magnificent suit of armour, which a merchant of Armenia had found by the roadside and given to the

King a few days before: who was its owner and how it came to be left there I can't tell you just yet, but if you will read on without skipping to the middle of the next chapter you will find out all about it. The lists were held by eight noble young knights, great favourites of the King, and the bravest and most skilful warriors to be found in all Syria; and whoever wished to win the beautiful armour must fight with them all in turn, and vanquish every one of them before he could be proclaimed conqueror of the tourney. The jousting had begun, and two or three lances had been broken, by the time that Grypho and Martan came upon the field; and finding two knights already engaged in fight they stood aside to watch the issue of the combat. Martan at first made a brave enough show, and rode as proudly into the lists as if Grypho's companionship had given him the Paladin's courage and skill; but when he saw the champion knight deal his adversary such a thrust in the face that the sword passed clean through his helmet and laid him dead upon the ground, so great fear fell upon the craven that his face grew suddenly pale as death, and he trembled in every limb with terror, as an aspen quivers in every leaf when the June breeze blows along the river. Still for all his fright he could not escape the peril, for in his foolish presumption he had challenged the champions of the lists, and the heralds now called on him to make his challenge good against the first of them. The trumpets sounded for the onset, and with his knees knocking against his horse's sides and his lance wobbling about in the rest, Martan started to meet his adversary; but before he got to the middle of the course he gave the off rein such a tug that his charger swerved right against the ropes, and the Syrian knight shot by without being able to touch him. The crowd yelled and hooted, the ladies laughed scornfully, and Grypho bit his lips with vexation to see his companion so disgrace himself; still there were some who said that the horse might have been to blame, and not the man who rode him. But when it came to fighting with the sword all doubts were at an end. For the coward's hand shook so with terror that he could

hardly hold the hilt, and he screamed with fright if his adversary's sword so much as touched a corner of his armour; and at last he fairly turned tail, and breaking through the ring of bystanders fled away as fast as his horse could carry him to his lodging in the town, with the taunts and laughter of all the people in his ears.

Grypho, who felt his own honour tarnished by the disgrace of Martan, was boiling with rage, and wished himself a thousand feet below the earth rather than be pointed at as the comrade of such a dastard. And when the heralds called on him to come forth and do battle in his turn, the people laughed again, for they expected him to prove himself no better than his companion. But Grypho was not the man to do himself dishonour in joust or battle; and what with rage and shame he was now wrought up to such a pitch that if the great Count Roland himself had met him in that moment he would have found it no easy matter to overthrow him. So as soon as the trumpet sounded he grasped his lance tightly in his hand, and putting spurs to his horse struck the first of the Syrian champions such a blow upon the chest as bore him fairly out of the saddle and over the crupper, and laid him with a shoulder out of joint upon the ground a good couple of yards behind his horse's heels. Great was the astonishment of all the people; and the old Chief Justice threw up his hands and let his wig drop from his head in amazement at finding that a man cannot always be known by his companions, as he had spent half his life in declaring, for that was his favourite maxim. But the surprise was still greater when Grypho struck the second champion's shield with such force that his lance was shivered into three pieces, and then drawing his sword smote him three such blows upon the helmet's crest that he fell dizzy and stunned upon the earth, and for six weeks afterwards went about with a buzzing in his ears. And in like manner Grypho vanquished all the eight champions each in his turn, wounding one and stunning another, so that it was many a day before any of them were fit to wield sword or lance again. All this had taken less than an hour; and King Noureddin, seeing that it was yet

scarce mid-day, devised new jousts to amuse the people till the evening; but Grypho rode gloomily away to his lodging. And when he came there he burst into such a torrent of threats against the vile knight Martan, that the craven turned green with fright, and Origille with her lying tongue had no small ado to make excuses for him, and wheedle the young Paladin into giving up his vengeance; but so great was his love for her that at last she got him to promise his pardon to the caitiff who had disgraced them all. But nothing would induce him to remain longer in a place where he had suffered such scorn; and sullenly bidding Martan and Origille mount their horses and follow him out of the town, he rode with them in silence to a little wayside inn some couple of miles outside the city gates. There he sent the horses to the stable, and worn out with vexation and with his efforts in the tournament, took off his armour and lay down upon a bed to rest, where he soon fell into so sound a sleep that if all the house had come rattling about his ears it would hardly have been enough to wake him.

Meanwhile Martan and Origille walked together in the little garden of the inn; and there this wicked couple hatched as treacherous a plot as ever you heard of against the name and fame of Grypho. For seeing that the young knight was lying fast asleep upon his bed, Martan entered his room by stealth, and taking off his own armour, which he left upon the floor of the chamber, dressed himself from head to foot in Grypho's snow-white panoply; then he went into the stables and saddled the white charger and Origille's palfrey, and so rode with her in all haste back to Damascus. It chanced that they arrived there just as the tournament was ended, and the King was bidding the heralds search for the unknown knight of the white armour who had fairly won the prize. So when Martan was seen riding with Origille into the great square, every one took him for the hero who had performed such wondrous feats of valour; all the people rent the air with the shouts of their applause, and the King, who loved to honour all doers of great deeds, came down from his throne to meet the pair, and received

them with such welcome as might have befitted the greatest prince and princess in all the world. For he bade the heralds proclaim the stranger knight as the greatest warrior that had ever been seen in Syria; and then placing Martan on his left hand and Origille on his right, rode with them to his royal palace, where he loaded them both with gifts, and afterwards entertained them at so magnificent a banquet that only to hear of it would make a Lord Mayor's mouth water for a week.

But while the wicked couple were thus enjoying the fruits of their treason, Grypho woke from his slumbers, and seeing Martan's armour lying on the floor where his own had been knew not what to think; but fearing some treachery he called for the landlord, and learnt from him that Martan had indeed taken the white horse and armour, and was gone in company with Origille towards Damascus. Then at last the miserable youth saw all his wretchedness; for he knew now that Origille's love for him was all a deceit, and that she was in truth the wife of Martan, as the Greek pilgrim had told him, and not his sister, as he had foolishly believed. In bitter sadness of heart, but thirsting for vengeance on the traitors, he put on the caitiff's armour and mounted his chestnut horse, since there were no others to be had, and galloped towards the city. Better had it been for him to have gone on foot and in a simple tunic; for from afar the people recognised the dishonoured horse and armour, and one of them ran to the palace and told Noureddin that the knight who had fled from the lists in the morning was now entering in by the gate. Thereat the King, who was still seated at the banquet, grew very wroth, and turning to Martan, he said: "I marvel, Sir Knight, that this shameless fellow should thus parade his dishonour before our very eyes; and I marvel too that so gallant a knight as yourself, the like of whom I never yet saw, should suffer such a graceless dastard in your company. Yea, I swear to you that were it not for the love I bear to you, who suffer him as your companion, I would yet make him smart for his cowardice and his impudence." And Martan, with an evil smile upon his lips, answered the King and said:

"Sir King, this dastardly rascal is no comrade in arms of mine, and in truth I know not what is his name nor whence he comes; but two days ago he joined himself to us on the road, and I permitted him to ride in our company, for he seemed to me of goodly and valiant aspect. But when I saw how he demeaned himself this morning in the lists I was filled with shame and anger; and save for the respect I bear to you and the city which you rule, I had surely punished him roundly for his villainy. Wherefore, I pray you, be not hindered by any regard for me, but inflict on him the chastisement of death which his infamy deserves." The King, however, answered that he held not such misdeeds to be a cause of death, but only willed that the people should have a merry spectacle prepared for them on the morrow. So he called one of his captains and told him of his purpose; and the captain took with him a company of soldiers, and came with them upon Grypho suddenly and unawares, so that before he could so much as clap his hand to his sword they had dragged him from the saddle, and bound him hand and foot with cords. Then they took him into the palace and cast him into a dismal dungeon for the night; but Martan and Origille finished their dinner with King Noureddin, and afterwards with great glee went to their rest. Still in spite of their evil gladness Martan was terribly afraid lest in the morning Grypho should come to speech with the King and manifest all the treason; so as soon as it was light he called up Origille and bade the pages saddle the white horse and the palfrey; and so, before the sun was well risen, rode with her out of the city and hastened along the road to Antioch. And there let them ride for a while, for I promise you they shall soon be richly punished for all their villainies.

They had not been gone above half an hour before Noureddin bade the heralds proclaim throughout the town that whoever would see a merry jest should come to the great square within an hour's time, and witness the disgrace of the dastard knight. And when the crowd was all assembled a rickety old tumbril filled with dirty straw was drawn up before the great door of the palace, and an up-

right pole was planted in the middle of it and firmly nailed to the bottom of the cart, to which were harnessed a pair of lean old cows, looking as if they had not tasted grass for a fortnight, and led by a couple of wrinkled hags the ugliest and wickedest to be found in all Damascus. Presently from the palace door came out four soldiers carrying the wretched Grypho stripped of his armour, with his wrists tied tightly behind his back, and his ankles secured in a rusty pair of iron fetters. They hoisted him up on to the tumbril and bound him firmly by the waist to the upright pole, and over his head they nailed a board with an inscription in letters a foot long: "This is the coward who fled from the tournament." The dishonoured armour, the cause of all his misfortunes, was tied to the back of the cart and dragged helmet downwards through the mud; and in front walked two of the Court heralds blowing on their trumpets and shouting at the top of their voices: "Behold how Noureddin King of Syria punishes a coward." Never was Paladin of France in such an evil plight. The boys pelted him with mud, the men poked at him with their sticks, and the women shrieked taunts at him with shrill, abusive tongues; and thus, with scorn and insult, they led him round the square and through all the principal streets, till at last the procession halted outside the main gate of the city. There the soldiers took him down from the cart and loosened the fetters from his feet and the cords from his hands, and mockingly bade him go and practise for his next appearance in the lists; but they little knew with whom they had to reckon. For no sooner were his hands and feet free from their bonds than he dashed at his sword, and snatching it from the scabbard dealt the nearest soldier such a blow upon the shoulder that his body fell cloven to the waist. Frenzied with wrath, Grypho leaped amid the throng, and spared not the boys who had pelted him nor the old men who had struck him with their crutches; but most of all he raged against the soldiers, and so sorely did he smite them that of all their company not one remained alive to tell the tale. Then the laughter of the crowd was turned to shrieks and wailing,

and their mockery to cries for pardon; but the pitiless knight slew all who came within his reach, and before five minutes were over a hundred bodies lay dead upon the ground around him. Happy were those nearest to the gate, for they rushed pell-mell within the walls; but when a few had got safely through, their terror was so great lest Grypho should make a rush into the city, that they closed the gates and lowered the portcullis behind them and left the screaming multitude outside at the mercy of the infuriated Paladin. Alas! in that hour Grypho took no thought of mercy, but whirled the dripping sword round his head and hacked and slew till the road ran with blood like a river at the flood time, and ceased not his vengeance till all who could escape the sword had fled over fields and hedges far away and left him all alone among a thousand corpses. Then at last he put back the sword into its scabbard and hastened to buckle on the traitor Martan's armour and look about for a place where he could defend himself with vantage; for he knew that the King and his knights would soon come against him to avenge the slaughter of their people; and he said to himself, with a grim smile: "They shall not take me unawares a second time."

It chanced that just outside the gate there stood a moated castle, which had long been uninhabited save by the owls and jackdaws that made their nests among its ruins. Three of the planks which formed the ancient drawbridge were rotted away by age, but the two others still spanned the moat, which was both large and deep, and formed a passage some couple of feet in width where one man might defy a thousand; and there Grypho took his stand, ready to hold this narrow bridge against all assailants. He had not long to wait, for Noureddin no sooner heard of the slaughter of his people than he bade fifty of his bravest knights don their arms and mount their horses and bring the foreigner dead or alive before him without delay, for he was persuaded that they would make short and easy work of a man whom they still believed to be the fugitive from yesterday's tournament. But when this gallant company defiled through the gate and saw how Grypho stood fronting

them with his sword drawn in his hand and bathed from head to foot in the blood of his victims, they began to doubt whether their task might not prove a trifle harder than they had expected. Their leader, however, dismounted and advanced towards the head of the bridge; but before he could reach it the Paladin flew at him as a wild cat flies upon her pursuers, and raising his sword in both hands brought it down with such a sweep upon his head that the keen blade went crashing through the helmet and split the Syrian's skull through to the teeth. Next a young knight leaped from his horse and rushed to avenge his chief; but for him Grypho waited on the middle of the bridge, and lunged at him with so true an aim that the sword pierced the joints of his armour between the ribs, and the poor youth staggered backwards and fell lifeless into the moat below. Thereat the whole band of Syrians stood silent and aghast, and before they could recover from their amazement the Paladin darted from his stronghold and with two swift blows laid two more of them dead upon the field; but when the others rallied and advanced all together to assail him, he retreated to his narrow plank and bade defiance to them all. And thus for near an hour did this one knight maintain himself against fifty, sometimes sallying forth and staining his sword to the hilt in the blood of his enemies, and then retreating again to his bridge, whither the bravest of them feared to follow; so that ten of their number lay dead upon the earth before him, and though they had twice wounded him, in the shoulder and in the thigh, they seemed no nearer the end of their enterprise than when first they came out to take him. Now when King Noureddin found that his knights returned not as he had bidden them, he called for his horse and clothed himself in his armour and rode in haste to see what such a delay might mean. And when he found but thirty-nine of his fifty knights left alive—for ten lay dead upon the field and one was fallen into the moat,—and saw Grypho standing boldly on the bridge, he marvelled greatly and his heart was black with anger; but when he drew near and beheld how the helmets of the dead men were riven and

their armour hacked and hewn from their bodies, his wrath against the stranger was turned to admiration, and he repented bitterly of the injury he had done him, for he said: "Truly it was no dastard's arm that could deal such blows, but the might of the most valiant warrior in all the world." So he bade the knights fall back from before the bridge, and himself leaped down from his horse, and with his right hand bared in token of peace advanced towards the Paladin and said: "Great has been my error, valiant Sir Knight, and just and righteous is your vengeance; for the scorn which I thought to do to the vilest knight on earth I have done to the noblest, and I know not if I can ever make sufficient atonement for so grievous a wrong; but forasmuch as I did it in ignorance, I beseech you grant me your forgiveness and suffer me to honour you henceforward as much as I have abused you this day; for I swear to you that whatever you shall ask of me, even to the half of my kingdom, I will freely give it you." Now when Grypho found that the King's wrath was turned to repentance and his enmity to loving friendship he rejoiced greatly, and with a glad voice answered and said: "Well I wot, Sir King, that whatsoever you did against me was done in ignorance and error, for the vile knight who yesterday fled away in fear from the tournament entered my chamber while I slept, and took away my armour and my horse, and therewith devised this treachery against my honour. Now, therefore, I willingly accept your friendship and repent me of the destruction which I have wrought upon your people; but I ask neither lands nor gifts, for it becomes not a Paladin of France to be covetous of aught save fame and honour." Great was the delight of Noureddin at hearing the answer of the noble knight; and the old Chief Justice who had ridden out with the King chuckled with satisfaction, and whispered in his horse's ear: "Did not I always tell His Majesty that you should look before you leap?"—for the old fellow dearly loved a proverb. So Grypho and Noureddin returned in love and friendship to the palace, where the King laid him in his own bed and sent his chief surgeon to dress his wounds, and tended him night and morning

as a father watches over his son; and all the people rejoiced to know that the terrible knight was become their friend.

Meanwhile Aquilas had been wofully distressed about his brother, for they had never been separated in all their lives before; and after vainly searching for him for two days, he fell in at last with the Greek pilgrim who had given Grypho such evil news of Origille. From him Aquilas heard how the witch had married Martan and was gone with him to Damascus, and how they purposed returning after the tournament to Antioch; the pilgrim told him also that two days since he had related the same story to Grypho. Thereupon Aquilas made no doubt but that his brother was gone to Damascus, and perhaps to Antioch; and begging Astulf and Sansonet not to sail for France till he returned, he set off that very hour, and in less than a week arrived before the walls of Martan's city. There he made diligent inquiry, and found that the faithless pair were not yet returned from the tournament; so the next morning he started again upon his journey, and took the road to Damascus. Two days more he travelled thus, and on the third he saw the white armour of his brother flashing in the distance; and thinking it was surely Grypho who rode to meet him, he put spurs to his horse, and with a cry of gladness held out his hand in welcome. But when he came up with the party, he saw that it was a stranger who rode by the side of Origille; and in furious anger he cried: "Stop! traitor and thief, as I hold you, and tell me whence had you this horse and panoply?" Origille, when she recognised the jet-black steed and armour, and heard the angry voice, was seized with fear, and turned her palfrey's head for flight, but Aquilas was too quick for her, and grasping her rein he vowed that the first movement which she or Martan made should cost them both their lives. Then Martan in a voice that shook with terror began to make excuses, and invented a hundred lies to explain the adventure, but Aquilas believed him never a word, and with dreadful threats compelled him to confess the truth. And when he knew it, he made the guilty pair dismount, and stripping Martan of the stolen armour, tied his hands tight

behind his back, and bound him firmly on one of the pages' horses with his face towards the tail; Origille too he fastened to her saddle, and laying the white armour on the back of Grypho's charger, who whinnied with delight and followed his black companion without needing to be led, the good knight brought the whole party with him to Damascus. There the news soon spread abroad that the traitor and his wicked wife were being led prisoners through the city, and all the people came out to see them, and greeted the brave Paladin with cheers, and showered down flowers upon his head; but Martan and the witch they hooted and pelted with dirt, and could hardly be kept from tearing them to pieces on the spot. As soon as Noureddin heard the news, he hastened forth to meet the victor; and when he knew that it was Grypho's brother who had wrought this vengeance, he welcomed him with love and gladness, and took him to the palace, and brought him to the chamber where Grypho lay healing of his wounds; so there with great joy Aquilas greeted his brother, and heard from his mouth of all the wonderful things that had happened in his absence. But Martan and Origille were thrown into the dungeon, and lay there in great fear all that night, for the King was minded to punish them with death upon the morrow. The noble Grypho, however, said he desired not the death of either of them, but only that Martan should bear such scorn as he himself had suffered, and that Origille should no more be able to betray a valiant knight; and to this Noureddin at length consented. So the next morning the cart was brought again into the great square, and Martan was led through the city as Grypho had been before, after which the public executioner came and stripped him to the waist, and gave him two hundred lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails on his bare back, and so let him go upon his way half dead with pain and fright; but Origille was kept in prison till the Queen should return,—for she was gone on a visit to her father, the King of Cyprus,—and decide what should be done with her. And of the further adventures of Aquilas and Grypho I will tell you something more in the next chapter, for it is high time that this one came to an end.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ASTULF AND HIS COMPANIONS MET WITH MARFISA; AND HOW THE PEOPLE OF DAMASCUS HAD AGAIN THE WORST OF IT.

THE two wounds which Grypho had received in fighting against such fearful odds proved very severe, so that it was a week before he was able to leave his bed, and nearly a month before he recovered all his strength. Meanwhile Noureddin had been considering how best to make amends for the outrage he had inflicted on him; for the remembrance of his error filled him with grief, and in spite of all that the brothers said to comfort him, his heart was heavy at the thought that he, who above all things delighted to honour the valiant and shame the craven, should have let himself be so tricked and bamboozled by a vile impostor. And after much thought he resolved to proclaim another tournament, still more splendid than the first, to be held in a month's time, and for the chief prize of it he appointed the very suit of armour of which Martan on the last occasion had defrauded the brave young Paladin. For although Grypho would accept nothing as a gift, he would surely, thought the King, consent to take the armour when he had won it a second time by his prowess in the lists; and that he and no other would win it Noureddin doubted not for a moment, for he held him to be the bravest and strongest knight in all the world. So he sent his heralds to make the proclamation in every kingdom from the Euphrates to the Danube, and kept all his courtiers busy from morning to night devising shows for the day-time, and

feasts and dances for the evenings; and very sick the courtiers grew of the whole concern, but it was as much as their places were worth to say so.

Now Astulf was still sojourning with Sansonet in the land of Palestine, when the fame of King Noureddin's proclamation reached his ears. And thereupon he took counsel with his host how they might have a part in these brave doings; "for 'twere a thousand pities," said the jovial Englishman, "that so merry a jig should be piped in Damascus, and we lift never a leg to dance." So they bade their squires polish up their armour, and see that all the horses were in good case for the journey—for Sansonet had appointed a squire of gentle birth to wait on the Paladin, as befitted a knight of such high degree—and the next morning they set out in great state, and took the northern road. They travelled towards Syria leisurely and by easy stages, for it wanted yet a fortnight to the appointed day, and they took pleasure in viewing the beautiful country through which they passed; besides, like gallant riders as they were, they were careful not to weary the good steeds that carried them. Not that it would have mattered much to Rabican, who could have gone a thousand times the pace at a pinch; but even he liked a quiet time now and again as well as the veriest sluggard that ever was foaled, while his master had no wish to leave Sansonet and the squires out of sight behind him, and was far too good a horseman to press his mount without necessity. Now just remember this, and follow Astulf's example the next time you get a day's hunting, and spare your pony as much as ever you can; for if only you do your best to ride straight to hounds, you may be sure he will have had quite as much work as is good for him by the end of the day; though I won't deny but that there's a grim sort of satisfaction in seeing a good stiff plough ahead, when you're on the back of a hard-mouthed brute who nearly pulls your arms from their sockets in his efforts to ride over the pack.

The two Paladins travelled thus for ten days without any adventure; but when they were within three days' journey of Damascus they came to a place where four

roads met, and there they encountered, as they thought, a knight of lordly bearing, clad from head to foot in splendid armour, and mounted on a magnificent charger. But this warlike person was in truth no knight at all, but the great Princess Marfisa, whose name was a sound of terror through all Asia, for in all the Eastern lands there was not a warrior who could stand against her. No one knew anything of her parentage, for she had been stolen away in her childhood by a band of Arab pirates, who brought her home with them to Arabia, and presented her to the King of the country; and the King, who was old and childless, took the little maiden to his heart, and brought her up as his own daughter. Great ladies were appointed to wait on her and teach her all such arts and graces as might befit a noble Princess; her table was served with the daintiest meats and the choicest wines, and she had twice as many rich gowns as she could possibly wear, and jewels enough to outblaze the sun at mid-day. But Marfisa was not like other girls, for she cared not a whit for all these womanly splendours, but delighted only in the discipline of arms and the practices of knightly science. And as she grew to the strength and stature of a man, and was never weary of exercising herself in the use of lance and sword, she presently came to such perfection in the warrior's craft, that she vanquished every knight at the old King's Court, and gained the reputation of having the firmest seat and the strongest arm in all the land of Arabia. From that day she put away the robes and ornaments of a woman, and was never seen abroad save equipped with sword and mail; and her greatest pleasure was to wander about the world in quest of battles or adventures in which she could prove her prowess and win herself immortal glory. Now therefore, when she saw two knights of such goodly aspect advancing to meet her, she was filled with exultation, and went forward in haste to defy them to single combat; for she no sooner clapped eyes upon a stranger than she longed to tilt him out of his saddle, or try the temper of her sword upon his armour, and in all her encounters she had never yet met the man who could get the better of her.

But when she came up with the Paladins and looked at them more narrowly, she recognised the bold Duke Astulf; for she had known him a few years since in far Cathay, and had proved his valour and good fellowship in many a strange adventure. So she raised the visor of her helmet and held out her hand in welcome, and Astulf greeted her with great joy, as one who knew her worth and counted himself honoured in her friendship. Then she asked him of his journey; and when Astulf had told her that he was going with Sansonet to be present at Noureddin's tournament, she answered: "With your leave, gallant friends, I will ride in your company to Damascus, for I would gladly have a finger in so brave a pie." So for two days they rode all together, and on the third they came to the little inn outside the city where Grypho had been robbed of his horse and armour; and there they halted for the night, and with good cheer and sound sleep prepared themselves for the morrow's festival.

As soon as the sun was risen they sent messengers into the town to make inquiry when the jousting would begin; and these presently brought back word that there was not a moment to be lost, for they had found the people already gathered in their thousands and the balconies filled with ladies, while the King was expected to leave the palace every minute. Thereupon the three comrades hastened to buckle on their armour, and mounting their horses came forthwith to the great square, where they found Noureddin already seated on his throne, and the whole company of knights assembled in the lists and waiting eagerly for the heralds to give the signal for the opening of the tournament. Now King Noureddin had ordered the magnificent armour which was to be the conqueror's guerdon to be set up as a trophy in the entrance to the lists, and had added to it a rapier and mace of the finest workmanship, and a charger such as any warrior might be proud to ride; for he made sure that none but Grypho could possibly be proclaimed the victor; and he took delight in giving as a prize to the brave young knight what he could never induce him to accept as a gift. But all his plans were upset by the

dauntless Marfisa; for when she rode up to the barrier and saw this armour displayed in the entrance, she recognised it at once as her own, and not for all the world would she suffer it to pass into the possession of a stranger or remain another day out of her keeping. For it had been given to her many years before by her adopted father, and she prized it above all her other possessions; but some couple of months ago as she was returning from Armenia, the notorious thief Brunello had managed to run off with her sword, and because the heavy armour hindered her in the pursuit of him she had taken it off and laid it by the side of the road, intending to come back and put it on again as soon as she had punished the robber. Meanwhile, however, the Armenian merchant had passed by the place, and finding it lying there with no sign of any one to own it, he had laid it among his bales, and afterwards made a present of it to King Noureddin, as I told you in the last chapter. Marfisa had been terribly vexed by the loss, and was now so glad to see her good arms again that she stayed not a moment to think how she might best regain them, but rode straight up to the trophy, and snatching them hastily off the pole that supported them, with a great clatter laid them across the pommel of her own saddle. The whole company of knights stood dumb with amazement, wondering what so strange a proceeding might mean; but the populace was mad with rage, and clean forgot how Grypho had played the schoolmaster to them a month ago, and taught them that knights-errant were better let alone for the future. Yelling and screaming with fury, and encouraged by the frowning King, they set upon Marfisa all at once with sticks and stones and any other weapon that came to hand, while others tried to wrest the disputed armour from her grasp or drag her by main force from off her saddle. But it's ill taking the breeks off a Highlander, as our brothers of Scotland say; and the dauntless Princess soon showed this senseless mob that warriors in plume and mail are uncommonly kittle cattle to shoe. For no gentle lady ever went to display her gorgeous robes at dance or festival with half the pleasure that this warlike damsel felt

amid the crash of arms in the press and peril of battle. Lowering her lance's point and putting spurs to her horse she careered amid the crowd, striking one on the neck and another on the breast, bearing them to the earth by scores, and trampling them under the hoofs of her charger. And when her stout lance bent and broke she drew her terrible sword and cut off here a head and there an arm, cleaving one man's shoulder-blade and piercing another through the ribs, till the dead and wounded lay round her in a heap, and the foolish crowd fled shrieking and wailing from before her. Astulf and Sansonet were but ill pleased to see the merry festival turned to such woful carnage; still, when they saw the fight fairly set a-going they drew down their visors and prepared to help their comrade, and charging among the populace, one with the lance and the other with the naked blade, they rivalled Marfisa herself in the havoc and destruction that they wrought.

Meanwhile Aquilas and Grypho were burning with impatience, for they pitied the hapless rabble whose folly had brought them to such a pass, and still more they held themselves bound in honour to succour the generous Noureddin and avenge the insult done him by Marfisa's rashness. So as soon as space enough was clear for action they laid their lances in the rest and came thundering down upon the three disturbers of the peace; for the confusion was so great that they recognised neither Astulf nor Sansonet, and these last were so occupied with their battle against the mob that they paid little heed to the persons and devices of their assailants. But our Englishman bore in his hand the wonderful lance of gold, and scarcely did he strike the point of it against the boss of Grypho's shield before the knight of the white armour fell from off his saddle and lay sprawling all his length upon the ground. Then Astulf encountered Aquilas, and did the like by him, while Sansonet disposed of another knight who had leagued himself with the noble brothers. Thereupon Marfisa, seeing that the people had fled in all directions and the way was clear before her, started off to leave the square and return to the inn beyond the walls, carrying her

recovered armour on her pommel and followed by the two Paladins her companions, who rode with her unmolested along the street till they came to the city gates. But the brothers had no sooner picked themselves up and recovered their horses than they started off in pursuit of their conquerors, for they were furious at having been so easily unhorsed, and took shame to appear before the King without having first retrieved their reputation. Marfisa and her companions were in the act of crossing the drawbridge when they heard a challenge in their rear, whereupon they turned their horses' heads, and taking up their position at the entrance to the bridge awaited the onset of their pursuers. The brothers came on in hot haste followed by a bevy of Syrian knights eager to help them in avenging the insult to their King; but when Grypho was come within a stone's throw of the party he recognised the arms and device of Astulf, and reining in his charger saluted him with reverence, begging him to say who were his companions—for he knew not Sansonet's device,—and wherefore they had laid hands upon the armour and slaughtered the people of King Noureddin. When Astulf saw that it was the son of Oliver who addressed him, he gave him joyful welcome and courteous answer, telling him that his comrades were Sansonet the Paladin and the great Princess Marfisa, but about the armour, which was the cause of all this tumult, he said he knew not overmuch; only, seeing the battle in full swing, Sansonet and he had gone to the succour of their companion. Now while the Duke was speaking thus with Grypho, Aquilas too came up and gave him courteous salutation, for they felt it no shame to have been overthrown by the mighty Astulf, but rather counted it an honour to have crossed lances with so valorous a knight. And all the other knights stood by awaiting the issue of the parley; but when Astulf named his companions one of them turned and galloped back as fast as his horse could carry him to find the King, and said: "Sir King, an you would not bring death on all your people, hasten now and make an end of this strife, for the knight who laid hands upon the armour is no other than the terrible Marfisa." When they

heard this name of fear all the courtiers shook in their shoes and held their breath for fright, and Noureddin took a flag of truce in his hand and pressed forward without delay towards the bridge; but Marfisa, seeing that he came in peaceful guise, rode out to meet him, and raising her visor, said in haughty tones: "I know not, Sir King, by what right you set for prizes in your tournaments such things as are not yours to give away. Mine are these arms, and I left them a while since upon the road because they hindered me in the pursuit of a certain thief who had done me a wrong; but if you chance to know my device behold it is here imprinted on the cuirass for a witness to my claim." And Noureddin answered her graciously, and said: "Noble lady, your word is proof enough, neither need I any other witness; and in good sooth had you claimed the arms in friendly fashion at the first, neither I nor any man had gainsaid you: for albeit I had destined them for Grypho, well I know that of his courtesy he would have given them to me again, that I might satisfy your just demands. Now therefore take them as you desire, and I will pray Grypho to be content with other gifts in recompense of these which he has lost." And Grypho said: "Sir King, I thank you for this and all your other courtesies, for the which I hold myself so much your debtor, that an occasion to do you a pleasure is more welcome to me than a thousand gifts." But Marfisa, now that her honour was satisfied and her claim allowed, was not to be outdone in courtesy, and was fain to yield the prize to Grypho, only he was as unwilling to take it as she was generous in offering it; and at last, after much gracious contention, the young Paladin received the armour from the Princess and immediately returned it to her as a gift; after which they rode back all together to the square, and their quarrel was turned to friendship. Then the interrupted tournament was held with double splendour; and the King of his bounty gave another suit of armour as a prize, which was won by Sansonet amid great applause, for Astulf and Marfisa and the sons of Oliver abstained from the contest, that their comrade might have the surer victory. And for

ten days they all remained with King Noureddin, and bore their part in all manner of joyous entertainments; after which the four Paladins were fain to make haste towards the land of France, and the dauntless Princess offered herself to travel in their company, for above everything on earth she desired to encounter the peerless Roland, and match herself in single combat against that paragon of knighthood. So they took leave of the King of Syria and rode to the nearest port, where they found a merchant ship laden with bales for Italy and just ready to put to sea; and when they had made agreement with the captain for their passage they embarked with their horses without delay, and the next morning sailed out of the harbour and with a fair wind steered towards the west.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MARFISA AND THE PALADINS CAME TO THE COUNTRY OF THE MANSLAYING WOMEN; AND HOW ASTULF WAS LEFT ALONE IN THEIR CITY.

THE ship in which this gallant company took their passage was one of the largest merchantmen then afloat, and belonged to a trader of Amalfi, which was at that time the most flourishing seaport in Italy; and although the lines on which she was built have been out of fashion for some eight or ten centuries, and the sight of her would make our modern Jack Tars stare with eyes as wide as crown pieces and hold their sides with laughing, for all that this carack was a good roomy vessel, broad in the beam and high at the bows and stern, and her seasoned timbers were as stoutly put together as the good Italian shipwright could peg them. Starting from Tripolis of Phœnicia, she made a straight course to the shores of Cyprus, and leaving desolate Famagosta with its dreary marsh to starboard, coasted along the southern shore of the island past flourishing Larnaca and the broad bay of Limasol, and so came to an anchor in the roadstead of beautiful Paphos. There the whole company went on shore, the sailors to lade more bales for their cargo, and the passengers to enjoy the sight of one of the loveliest spots in all the world. Six or seven miles from the water's edge rose gradual slopes of gently undulating hills; groves of laurel and myrtle and spreading cedars alternated with the rich green leaves and golden fruit of the orangeries; while the teeming soil was laden with bunches of serpillum and marjoram, thickets of roses, and

wide beds of crocus and lily, whose mingled scents were wafted by the land breeze far across the sapphire sea. From a clear fount amid the hills flowed down a limpid stream which watered all the plain; and groups of lads girt with crimson sashes were gathered upon its banks, and danced with the dark-eyed peasant girls, who laid down their unfilled pitchers in the moss or spread the dripping linen in the blazing sunshine.

All that day the travellers remained at Paphos and took their fill of pleasure in its scenes of beauty; but at sundown they returned on board their ship, and weighing anchor by the moonlight started again upon their voyage. For a night and a day they sped swiftly over a calm sea; but at the following sunset the wind shifted to the west, and presently increased to such a gale as put them in peril of their lives, and made the captain vow that in thirty years of seafaring he had never known so fearful a storm. For great black masses of clouds shrouded night and day in almost equal darkness; the rain came down like a flood, and hailstones the size of pigeons' eggs rattled upon the decks and drove the sailors from their work, while the waves ran mountains high, and the wind howled and shrieked among the rigging. For two days they ran before the gale and knew not whither they were going, for they saw neither the sun by day nor the stars by night; and on the third day the mast fell overboard with a crash, and a wave carried away their rudder, and left them helpless at the mercy of the tempest. Then the sailors gave themselves up for lost, and as men without hope they all prepared to die; and the dauntless Marfisa herself confessed that on that day she had first known fear. But just as their terror was at the worst the rain ceased and the wind began to abate; and presently they fell in with a swift current, which carried them along at such a rate that it seemed as though they must soon come to the world's end; but when the thick clouds rolled away, they sighted land ahead, and fell to wondering where in the world they could be, for it was well-nigh three days since they lost their bearings. But when they came nearer to the shore

they saw two massive ledges of steep rock, which jutted out in the form of a crescent into the sea, so that their ends nearly met together, and they formed natural breakwaters to the vast harbour which lay within them; and through the narrow gap appeared a wide stretch of tranquil water, and a mighty city built upon the shore beyond it. Each of the projecting ledges of rock was crowned at its end with an impregnable fortress, and the city was protected on the land side by a battlemented wall of solid masonry, from which rose a hundred strong and lofty towers at equal intervals; while far in the distance a huge semicircle of mountains shut in the view with a rampart of frowning crags, which looked as though nothing but a bird could hope to cross them. Now when the captain of the ship beheld this fearsome place and saw that the resistless current was bearing the vessel straight for the narrow channel between the rocks, he threw up his hands in agony, and crying, "We are lost! we are lost!" fell down and swooned upon the deck with terror. But as soon as he came to himself Duke Astulf asked him in amazement what could be the reason of his despair, for to him and his companions the sight of land was as welcome as the first warm breeze of April to the budding hedgerows long nipped by the piercing blasts of March. And the captain answered: "Alas! my masters, better had it been for us to perish in the angry sea than to seek refuge on this blood-stained shore! For beyond those rocks lie the harbour and city of Issus in Cilicia; and there dwell the manslaying women, whom all sailors and merchants dread more than the African quicksands or the fatal cliffs of Malea. There the women bear rule and clothe themselves in mail for battle, but the men stay at home, and clad in women's robes ply the needle and the loom and do the service of the house; only ten men of the whole nation are trained in the use of arms for the fulfilment of an ancient custom. For whenever a foreign vessel comes into their power they lead the whole crew into captivity, and those of gentle birth are hanged outright upon the gallows, but the meaner sort are kept in chains to till the ground or pasture

the flocks and herds, and with cruel oppression their slavery is made worse than the worst of deaths; and thus these pitiless women deal with all who fall into their hands, unless there be among them any knight of such valour as to essay the appointed trial of his strength and grace. And the trial is this: he must first vanquish in the lists the ten warriors who alone among their men are trained to arms for this very purpose, and afterwards he must keep up the dance with ten of their damsels the whole night long without rest or pause or sign of weariness. And if he pass victoriously through the trial, his comrades are free to go whithersoever they please, but he himself remains in the city with great honour as commander of their armies and chief of their band of champions: but if he be either vanquished in the field or make a single false step in the dance, he must be slain on the morrow amid cruel torments, and all his companions will end their days in hateful slavery. And rather would I plunge a dagger into my own breast, or cast myself amid the raging waves, than bend my neck to the yoke of these abominable women!"

Now when Astulf and his companions heard what the captain said they were mightily cheered in spirit, for they had had more than enough of the terrors and perils of the sea, but they feared no danger where there were lances to be broken and swords to be drawn in the stricken field. And Marfisa laughed aloud, and thought to herself: "Truly this city of warrior dames would be just the place for me;" but she said nothing, because the captain and all his crew supposed her to be a man, and she had no wish to undeceive them. But Astulf comforted the worthy captain, and bade him fear nothing, for he or one of his comrades would surely deliver all of them from this danger. While he was yet speaking, a great galley, rowed by slaves who were chained to their oars, and filled with warrior women armed from head to foot, came swiftly through the harbour mouth, and making fast a line to the bows of the ship towed her across the harbour and up to the city quay. And on the way the women told them of the customs of the place, and asked if there were any man in the ship so

bold and agile as to essay the trials of the combat and the dance; to which Astulf made answer, as had been agreed beforehand, that there were there five knights, brothers in arms, all equally eager to be put to the proof, and therefore the lots should decide which of them should be their champion. So they cast lots among themselves, and the lot fell upon Marfisa, whereat she laughed again for gladness, and whispered in the ear of Astulf: "Beshrew me, but I will give these iron sisters of mine a lesson in their own craft." So they came to the steps of the quay, where Marfisa and the Paladins made haste to disembark and mount their horses; but the captain and crew remained closely watched by their captors on the ship and busied themselves with rigging a jurymast and shipping a new rudder, which the women lent them gaily, for they said: "We lend you a rudder to-day, but we shall take yourselves and your ship in payment to-morrow."

So the ship was towed into the middle of the harbour and there came to an anchor; but the gallant little band rode through the town escorted by a great crowd of women, till they came to the place set apart for tournaments and combats. It was a vast square bounded on all its four sides by great steps of stone, which rose to a height of fifty feet, and were covered with scarlet cushions to serve as seats for the spectators; in the middle of each side were gates of solid bronze, and across the ends were drawn stout barriers of timber behind which the knights could await their turn for jousting. Through the southern gate Marfisa and her comrades rode into the square, and the Paladins remained seated on their horses behind the barrier, but their champion passed beyond it and prepared for the coming of her opponents. She rode a charger of dapple gray with faultless points and magnificent paces, given to her by King Noureddin, who had picked him out as the best horse in all his stable and adorned him with a rich caparison in token of the honour in which he held her; and she wielded a lance so stout and heavy that four squires could scarcely lift it from the ground, but to the strong hand of Marfisa it felt as light as the plume upon her casque.

Very soon the seats were filled with an eager throng of steel-clad women and petticoated men, and to the sound of bugles and trumpets the ten warriors entered the square by the northern gate. The first of the band rode proudly into the lists on a splendid horse with a coat of raven black save for a small star of white upon the forehead; and he was clad in black armour with a white star in the centre of his shield, and looked as though he were worth all the other nine put together for strength and skill. And when the bugles sounded for the onset he alone showed practice of chivalry, for he disdained to take his enemy at a disadvantage, and drew aside to watch the issue of her combat with his companions. These rode all together to the attack, but Marfisa came thundering against the first of them with such a shock that her lance's point pierced clean through shield and buckler and stood out a couple of feet behind the warrior's back. Without waiting to disengage the body from her lance the Princess bore down upon the second of the band, and caught him such a blow upon the throat that she laid him with a broken neck upon the ground; and the same fate befell the third and fourth whom she encountered, for though the whole nine of them broke many a lance upon her armour, Marfisa cared no more for the thrusts that she received than the wall of a tennis-court cares for the strokes of the balls against its surface. But when she reached the farther end of the lists, she threw away the lance still cumbered with the dead knight's body, and drawing her sword from the scabbard hastened to make mincemeat of the five who still opposed her. One had his head shorn from his shoulders, two she clave through the skull, and slew a fourth with a thrust between the ribs; while she caught up the fifth, who turned and fled from before her, and cut him across the waist with such a stroke that his head and breast fell severed to the ground, while his legs remained upon the saddle and were borne by his frightened courser round the lists.

Now when the Chief saw that all his warriors were vanquished and slain he came forward in his turn to meet

Marfisa, but first he raised his hand as though he would speak with her, and when he saw that she stayed to listen he said: "Valiant Sir Knight, it were discourteous in me to come against you now that you are wearied with combat, and though I vanquished you such victory would bring me little honour; wherefore I beseech you take your rest and recover your strength this night, and to-morrow morning we will prove which of us is the better fighter." But Marfisa answered him: "I thank you for your courtesy, Sir Knight, but I am not unused to the exercise of arms and yield not for so slight cause to weariness, and there are yet two hours of day before us wherein I may prove to you that my arm has not lost its strength, and which it were shame to waste in slothful dalliance." And the Chief replied: "Would that all my wishes were satisfied as readily as I satisfy yours in this matter!" and therewith he bade his squire bring two mighty lances and invited Marfisa to choose whichever of them pleased her best, and taking the other for himself galloped to his post before the barrier. As soon as the trumpet sounded they rushed forward at full gallop to the encounter, while all the spectators held their breath to watch them; and they met in the very centre of the lists with such a shock that the stout lances of green oak splintered into a thousand fragments as though they had been dry sticks of brittle willow, while the legs of their chargers failed beneath them and the black horse and the gray rolled upon the plain together. Quick as lightning the champions leaped from their fallen steeds and renewed the battle with their swords. With thrust and parry, stroke and counter-stroke, they strove together for the mastery, and the steel blades clashed upon shield and helmet as the hammers ring upon the anvil; but neither could have any advantage over the other, and Marfisa said to herself: "Well was it for me that this warrior stood aside at the first, for had he come against me with the rest I had surely been slain upon the field." But the Knight of the White Star was not less astonished at the prowess of his enemy, and thought: "Well was it for me that this gallant knight accepted not my offer of repose, for now that I am fresh

while he is wearied I have much ado to hold my own against him." For two hours they maintained this wonderful battle with equal fortune and unabated fury; but when the sun was set and the brief twilight faded into darkness, the Chief went backwards a step, and raising his hand for a parley, said: "Valiant Sir Knight, the day is fairly spent, and to fight at random in the darkness brings no honour to either of us; I pray you therefore to tarry with me this night, you and all your comrades; for if you abide elsewhere in the city the women whose husbands you have slain will stir up a tumult against you; but in my house you can rest in safety till I slay you in fair fight to-morrow morning." And Marfisa answered him: "Sir Knight, it were better not to boast beforehand, seeing that hitherto you have had little advantage over me; but for your courtesy my comrades and I render you hearty thanks and with good will we accept your hospitality."

So they all followed after the Chief and came with him to his house; but when they took off their helmets in the banqueting hall great was the astonishment of the whole company, for the valiant chief appeared a lad not yet twenty years old, and Marfisa and the Paladins marvelled how such a stripling should be come to so great skill and valour; and no less amazed was the youthful knight at beholding the golden hair which fell down over the shoulders of the Princess; for even in that land of warrior dames he had never found a woman to compare with her in prowess. Then Marfisa told him of her name and country and asked him of his own, but he answered: "Noble Lady, I pray you excuse me yet a little while, for the supper is now ready and a fasting tongue is an ill talker; but when we have eaten and drunk I will make true answer to all your questioning." So they sat down all together at the board, and when they had taken their fill of meat and wine the young Chief turned to his guests and said: "Noble Lady and gallant Knights, I think that you will all know somewhat of my lineage, which is famous throughout the world, for I am sprung from the house of Clairmont and my father is Duke Hammon, Lord of Montalbano. Men call me

Guy the Wild, because I have sojourned from my boyhood in the rude forests by the banks of the Danube, and ten months since I was returning thence to join my kindred in their home when a strong wind caught my vessel and drove me to this bay of Issus. Here I came victorious through the trials of the combat and the dance; whereupon the women made me Chief of their champions, and gave me this palace to dwell in, and wedded me to the fairest of their damsels; but though I am held in great honour and bear rule in the land, yet I count the days of my captivity and sigh for an occasion to escape with my wife to the fair land of France." Now when Astulf heard this and found that the lad was son to his cousin Hammon, he embraced him lovingly and spoke to him of his brother Raynald and his sister the noble Bradamante; and at last he added: "Verily, Sir Guy, the hour is now come for the fulfilment of your wish, for here are we four Paladins of France, and with us is the great Princess Marfisa at whose name all Asia trembles, and if you join yourself to us and do battle by our side, by my faith I think it will take six Rolands to overthrow us. And I count it a monstrous thing that these women should hold in captivity a brother of Raynald and Bradamante; wherefore I pray you devise by what means we may best make our escape hence, and be sure that our swords will not fail you in the enterprise." Thereat the fierce light shone in Marfisa's eyes, and she added her voice to Astulf's, and her words were few and fiery, for she said: "All we have to do is to kill the women and burn the city." But Guy the Wild shook his head and answered with a sad smile: "O my friends! gladly will I stand by you and share your fortunes, but hope not to escape hence alive; for ten thousand women will be gathered to-morrow in the great square, while as many more will be kept to guard the walls and forts; and all these are trained to battle from their childhood; so that although we avenge ourselves by the slaughter of some hundreds, we must be vanquished by their numbers in the end." At this Marfisa curled her lip and cried: "The more oppose us, the more will meet their death;" but the young Chief shook his head

again and said: "Since you are resolved upon this adventure I will loyally brave it in your company, for to remain here is worse to me than death. Hear therefore what I propose, for I see no other hope of safety. Your sailors have repaired the damage done to your vessel, but we need a boat to reach her, and it is instant death for a man to be seen upon the shore. Now I will send my wife, who is faithful and true, to prepare a boat against our coming, and in the morning we will go all together and fight our way down to the quay; but before we can come thither we must needs pass through the great square where the women will be assembled, and there we must clear a passage with our swords or perish in the attempt." Then he called Aleria his wife and told her of his design, and she promised to help him to the uttermost of her power, for she loved him better than her life. So she went to the quay and made ready a swift-sailing boat, and stored it with food and wine, saying to her companions that she purposed making an expedition the next day; and coming secretly to speech with the captain of the merchantman she bade him be ready to sail upon the morrow as soon as the boat should be alongside, and when everything was prepared as she desired she returned to her husband's palace.

The next morning Aleria returned to the quay betimes and held her boat in readiness to sail, while the gallant little band rode into the great square greeted by the cheers of the assembled thousands, who supposed that they came to renew the fight of yesterday. But when they saw that they rode all together to the farther gates they easily guessed at their intention, and there arose such a tumult as is impossible to describe or imagine; for the whole assembly of women sprang to their feet and rushed to bar the passage; and though scores of them fell stricken by the blows of the valiant knights, yet the rest pressed on undaunted from behind and attacked them with such fury that Marfisa and Sansonet had their horses killed under them, and the whole company were like to be overwhelmed by the raging mass of their assailants. Then our jovial Englishman thought it high time to try a touch of magic; so clearing a little space

around him with a great sweep of his sword, he put his wonderful horn to his lips and blew such a blast as made the bronze doors fly open with a bang, while the ground trembled as though an earthquake had shaken all the place. At the first sound of that terrible instrument the women dropped their swords and shields in terror and fled away as fast as their legs could carry them; some rushed towards the mountains on the north, others to the cliffs to southward; many were trampled to death by the hurrying throng behind them, and many leaped headlong into the sea and perished by drowning in the waters. And the horrid noise affrighted friends and foes alike, so that the dauntless Marfisa herself, who never feared a foe, and Guy the Wild, and Sansonet, and the sons of Oliver, all turned tail like so many hares with the greyhounds in their rear and scampered to the quay, where they jumped into Aleria's boat, and thence into their own vessel, and never recovered from their panic till many a league of water lay between them and the Cilician coast. Then they looked one upon another and could scarcely speak for shame; but it was now too late to return, so they continued their voyage and in due time came safely to the shores of France.

Meanwhile Astulf had been running all about the city blowing louder and yet louder blasts upon his horn, till not a soul was left within a dozen miles of the place, except a few poor wretches who had thrown themselves from the windows of their houses and lay with broken legs upon the pavement. But when the Duke was tired of his music he came laughing down to the quay, expecting to find his comrades awaiting him in the boat; but he found not a sign of them in all the place, till at last he looked seaward and saw the white sail vanishing through the narrow channel. At that he felt thoroughly vexed, for he was of a sociable turn and had no great liking for his own company; but making the best of a bad job, he went into a deserted palace and helped himself to a round of beef and a flask of Chian wine, and consoled himself for the absence of his companions with a hearty luncheon.

CHAPTER V.

HOW ASTULF DESTROYED THE ENCHANTED PALACE OF ATLAS AND BECAME MASTER OF THE HIPPOGRIF.

LUCKILY for Astulf, Rabican had come unhurt out of the fierce battle with the women of Issus, in which Marfisa's dapple-gray and Sansonet's roan were killed. So as soon as the Duke had finished his beef and wine, he filled his flask and cut himself a good packet of sandwiches, in case he should be hungry or thirsty by the road; then he patted his noble courser on the neck and said: "My Rabican, for this time you must be my ship and carry me safely on my way to England." And at the sound of England Rabican pricked up his ears and pawed the ground in his eagerness to be off; so Astulf looked to his girths and vaulted into the saddle, and set out to travel overland by the northern road. He crossed over many a mountain pass, and forded many a rapid stream, and if he had been on the back of any other horse, he could hardly have come safely through so perilous a journey. Often, too, the wild mountain tribes moved to attack him, but he knocked them down with the golden lance, or dispersed them with the magic horn, if they persisted in giving him trouble; and thus he rode securely through the heart of Armenia, and reached the land of Angora, where the sheep have fleeces a foot in length, and as fine as the finest camel's hair; indeed, some people say that the wool grows ready dyed upon their backs, but for my part I don't believe it.

Thence he followed the track to the north-west, till he came to Scutari on the Bosphorus; and there he hailed a

ferry-boat, which took him over the strait to Constantinople, where the Greeks still reigned supreme, for the Turks had not yet arisen to destroy their empire.

Here Astulf had to content himself with a slice of bread and cheese for supper, because the Greeks were all busy disputing over a subtle question of philosophy, so that no one had time to cut up the meat or gather the vegetables for dinner.

Leaving Constantinople, the Duke struck northward again, and crossing the great Balkan mountains, came down to the banks of the blue Danube, which he followed through Servia and Hungary. Then he urged Rabican to his best pace, and sped so swiftly through the states of Germany, that in a few days he came to the great city of Cologne upon the Rhine; whence he journeyed down the river into Flanders, and there took ship for London.

Very joyful was the bold Duke at sighting once more the white shores of his native England; and "Ah!" he exclaimed, "if ever I am turned into a tree again, I will choose to be a lordly oak in the merry glades of Sherwood, or a tall thin poplar mirrored in some quiet backwater of the silvern Thames." But when he arrived in London, it seemed as though he were come to a city of the dead. Scarce a soul was to be seen about the once busy docks where he landed; not a man-at-arms was left to guard the Tower; and the portly Beefeaters who remained there looked haggard and melancholy, and sighed for the good old times when every day brought a royal banquet to be served, and every evening a band of merry comrades to help them in disposing of the remnants.

Struck with amazement, and fearing lest some terrible calamity had overwhelmed his country, Astulf asked the reason of this desolation. And he was told that the King with more than half his knights and barons had long been fighting by the side of the Emperor Charlemagne against the Saracens; but since the battle of the Pyrenees was lost, all the rest of his chivalry, and every able-bodied man in the country, had been summoned to the defence of Paris. Now when Astulf heard this, he leaped back into

his saddle without a moment's repose, crying: "By my halidome, I would not miss this giving of knocks for all the world!" So he started for Dover that afternoon, and engaged a boat to carry him over the straits to Calais.

The wind blew strongly from the east, and the captain of the vessel was ill pleased at the notion of putting to sea in such dirty weather; but the impatient Duke refused to delay his voyage, and persuaded him to make the attempt by an offer of double passage-money. They were not half way across the Straits, however, before the wind increased to a furious tempest, so that they could neither make the port of Calais, nor return to their anchorage at Dover; and to save the ship there was nothing for it but to run before the gale, which drove her westward down the Channel. For many hours they were all in peril of their lives; but at last they managed to run safely into the harbour of St. Malo, where Astulf rewarded the captain and crew with such heaps of money as made them wish their timbers might be shivered if they would not run a like risk every week for so generous a land-lubber.

Then the jovial Duke made haste to saddle his Rabican, and set out to encounter the Saracens. But presently he came to the very forest where Roger had lost the Hippogrif, and in the midst of which the cunning Atlas had built his enchanted palace. I hope you have not forgotten that I promised to tell you how Roger and Bradamante were delivered from this house of the old enchanter, where they would have wandered for the rest of their lives if Astulf had not come to the rescue. Of course the Duke knew nothing of either palace or magician when he crossed the borders of the forest; but he rode through it in the heat of the day, at the hour when the sheep cease browsing, and lie with their legs doubled under them upon the ground, while the shepherd and his panting dog take their mid-day slumber beneath the branches of a spreading beech. The hot sun gleamed through the trees and smote upon the armour of our Paladin, who was wearied with his ceaseless travelling, and parched with intolerable thirst. In this state he came to the beautiful spring which had tempted

Prince Roger before him, and which seemed to invite him to moisten his burning throat with a draught of its sparkling waters. Without an instant's hesitation he leaped down from the back of Rabican, and tying the bridle to a tree ran to slake his thirst at the fountain; but first he unlaced his hemlet and laid it on the moss beside him. Then he plunged his head into the refreshing water, and was in the middle of a delicious draught when a hunchbacked dwarf sprang suddenly out of the thicket, and snatching up the helmet from the bank scampered off with it along the woodland path. After him rode the Duke as fast as his horse could carry him; but though Rabican was swifter than the lightning, the dwarf's crooked legs moved by magic, and besides he had got a good start while Astulf was busy unfastening his reins and leaping into the saddle. In the twinkling of an eye they came to the gate of the palace and dashed almost together through the entrance; but no sooner were they inside the enclosure than the dwarf vanished from the sight of his bewildered pursuer, who went hunting all over the palace in the hopeless effort to find him. He sought him in every chamber and poked his nose into every cupboard of the house; down into the cellars and up into the attics he rambled, till not a hole or corner had escaped his gaze; and when he had ransacked the place once without result, he went a second and a third time over the same ground, but of course he could find no trace of his light-fingered little hunchback.

Now when his third search proved as fruitless as the others, it occurred to him that there must be magic at work; and straightway he consulted his Book of Spells to see if it made mention of this wonderful palace. And as soon as he laid the book in his hand, it opened of its own accord at the very page that he wanted; wherein he found a full description of the palace, with the name of the magician Atlas who had built it, and an account of the enchantments on which it depended. The book said that beneath the threshold was buried an image of wax, in which the spirit who maintained the place was imprisoned, and which was encased in a sheet of parchment covered with

spells and incantations and cabalistic figures of every description. Whoever wished to destroy the enchantment must first cut this parchment in pieces and scatter the fragments to the four winds, and then release the spirit from his prison by chopping off the head of the waxen figure; after which the spell would be broken and the palace would dissolve in a cloud of smoke.

When he read this, Astulf lost no time in making his way to the threshold and trying the weight of the door-step which covered the buried image. But cunning old Atlas was watching him all the while, and had no mind that he should destroy his fine building and release the noble knights who were detained within it. So he took to his magic arts again, and made our Duke appear to all the knights in the shape which they had chivied across the forest. To Roger he seemed the peasant who had stolen away the Hippogrif, to Bradamante the giant who had run off with her Prince upon his back; one thought he was the witch who had snatched the helmet from his head, and to another he appeared as the urchin who had filched his golden spurs. Thus they all rushed at him with one accord to take vengeance for the wrongs which Atlas had inflicted on them; Roger made towards him from the right and the noble Bradamante from the left, while Gradasso King of China and Brandimart the friend of Roland bore down to attack him in front. With them came full fifty other knights, both Christians and Saracens, and Atlas might well suppose that this clever trick had saved his enchanted palace. But Astulf was not yet at the end of his resources; and seeing that so many noble warriors, some of whom were a match for him in single combat, were now banded together to overwhelm him, he cried: "Magic for magic, my friends; let us see whether mine or the enchanter's is the stronger." And immediately he put his marvellous horn to his lips and blew "God save the Queen" in three different keys at once, and so loud that the horrible discord was heard all the way from France to the Crystal Palace. At that hideous noise every soul in the place clapped his hands to his ears and ran for his life into the forest, while

foremost of all in the flight was the old enchanter himself, whose legs had never moved at such a pace since he played his last game of football more than fifty years before. And not only did the knights rush wildly out of the enchanted precincts, but all the horses broke out of the stables and raced after their terrified masters, so that not a living creature was left with the jovial Duke except the Hippogrif, whose golden bit prevented him from getting away, and Rabican, whom his master caught by the bridle before he could start to join the rest. And this was the way in which Roger and Bradamante escaped out of the hand of Atlas, and found themselves riding side by side in the forest.

Now when Astulf was left to himself he set to work again with a will, and with a great tug wrenched up the heavy doorstep from its place. Under it he found a trench, at the bottom of which lay the waxen image completely covered over with its wrapping of parchment, as the Book of Spells had described it. Lifting up the bundle, the Duke tore off this parchment case, which he cut into a thousand fragments and scattered to the four winds. Then he raised his sword in both hands and chopped off the head of the image, and immediately he saw a red flame spring from the neck and consume the figure which had enclosed it, so that the soft wax melted away to nothing before his eyes. And as soon as all trace of the image had disappeared, the palace with its stables and gardens vanished suddenly in a cloud of smoke, and Astulf was left standing in the lonely forest between Rabican on his left hand and the Hippogrif on his right.

He noticed with joy that the winged beast still wore his golden bit, which made him as quiet and docile as a lamb, and which Astulf had seen given to Roger by the wise Queen Logistilla; and he thought to himself: "Here is a fine charger for me to ride about the world in quest of adventures." So he took his saddle off his own horse and threw it over the back of the Hippogrif; then he drew the girths tight, and would have started that instant on his voyage, but a thought of his faithful Rabican detained him. Well might he love that noble steed, who had borne him

safely through so many perils and encounters; and he could not bear to leave the loyal animal to shift for himself in the forest. So he resolved to wait where he was till somebody should pass by who could be trusted to take good care of the son of Flame and Wind. And for two days and two nights he waited without seeing a human creature; but as the third day was drawing to a close he beheld a gallant-looking warrior come riding towards him leading a spare horse saddled and bridled by his side. Presently the warrior came near, and Astulf perceived that it was no other than his cousin Bradamante, who had wandered thus for two days since she killed the traitor Pinabel and recovered her charger out of his possession. Very glad was Duke Astulf at falling in so luckily with the noble damsel, and gave her cousinly greeting; after which he begged her to take charge of Rabican till he should come again to claim him at her hands. To this Bradamante willingly consented, and Astulf gave her also the lance of gold to keep for him; for he said: "A lance would only be cumbersome to me while I have the book, the horn, and my good sword, to aid me in all adventures." So Bradamante took charge of Rabican and the golden lance; whereupon Astulf immediately bade her an affectionate farewell, and leaping upon the Hippogrif's back rose gently through the air, and was soon lost to sight above the tree-tops.

Bradamante had now two horses to lead besides the one upon which she rode; and although all the three were quiet to her hand, she had trouble enough to bring them along together through the forest. Presently, however, she fell in with a peasant of the country, who said that for a reward he would lead the two spare horses behind her, and would also show her the way into Italy and as far as the Abbey of Vallombrosa, where she desired to await the coming of her lover. But the fellow knew less about the road than he pretended, and took her so much out of the right way that after a week of wandering she found herself close to her own home at Montalbano. There she fell in with her brother Alured, and could not refuse to go with

him to her father's castle, though she would much rather have continued her journey to Vallombrosa. But when she arrived at home she found herself constrained to stay there; for the Duchess Beatrice her mother would not suffer her to depart upon any pretence, or to wander any more about the world for the present, and Bradamante was the best and most obedient of daughters. So she stayed quietly at home very much against her will; and there we must leave her and return to follow her jovial cousin Astulf.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW ASTULF JOURNEYED TO THE MOON, AND WHAT HE FOUND THERE.

I DARESAY you think that Monsieur Jules Verne is the only person who ever found out how to get up to the moon and down again, but I assure you that is quite a mistake, for if you will read this chapter you will learn that an Englishman performed the feat in safety some eleven hundred years before the clever Frenchman thought of shooting up his adventurous party from a cannon; and, what is more, you will find that the Englishman got much more fun out of his expedition than Jules Verne's scientific travellers, and saw a great many things that quite escaped their notice. But before I describe to you what Duke Astulf found in the moon I must tell you a little about his journey over the kingdoms of the earth, which was destined to lead to important results, as the fifth part of this history will show you.

From the forest where he parted from Bradamante he guided the Hippogrif southwards over France, and crossed the Pyrenees into Spain, where he took only an hour or two to fly over the kingdoms of Navarre and Castile, and so came to the southern province of Andalusia. Just as the sun was setting he arrived at the rich city of Seville, where the oranges now grow which are sent every year to Dundee to be made into marmalade for your breakfast. But when Astulf was there this trade with Scotland had not begun; for the Moors were masters over Spain, and Seville was one of their chief cities. There our Englishman beheld how the women of the place flocked down in the twilight to the

banks of the Guadalquivir and bathed together in its noble stream—a custom which they say is as old as the city itself, and which may still be in force for aught I know to the contrary. At all events, Prosper Merimée witnessed it less than fifty years ago, and described it in a tale which will charm the world for ever, even though railways and newspapers may do all they can to make one man as dull as another, and may succeed in improving all quaint customs of the sort off the face of this very much civilised earth.

Astulf stayed only one night in Seville, and the next morning flew on to Gibraltar; but little did he dream as he looked down upon that barren rock that it would one day fall into the hands of his countrymen, and be defended by them through a siege which would make the name of Elliot glorious in the long record of English heroism. From Gibraltar the Duke passed over the Straits to Morocco, where he turned the Hippogrif's head to the east, and flew right over the terrible Rodomont's kingdom of Algeria, till he came to the realm of Tunis, where the Saracen leader, King Agramant, bare rule. There he visited the seaport city of Biserta, which was then the capital of all Tunis; and beholding its magnificence he was struck by a brilliant idea, for he thought: "If only I could besiege this city now that its King is away in France, what a service I should do the Emperor and all the Christian army!" For the present, however, he had no means of carrying out so vast a project; but he treasured it in his memory, and bided a suitable opportunity. Then he flew on over Tripoli and the hot sands of the Libyan Desert, till he came to the fertile plain of Egypt, where he dismounted from his Hippogrif to pass the night in Cairo. The Egyptians had not forgotten how he had delivered them from Orrilus and Caligorant, and welcomed him back to Cairo with marvellous joy and honour; moreover they tried to persuade him to take up his abode among them for a time, but Astulf had other fish to fry; so he stayed only two days in Cairo, just to gratify the people who thronged to see him, and on the third day he mounted again and flew over the Southern desert, till he saw beneath him the green oasis in which the

old temple of Jupiter Ammon was built. Here he halted for an hour and refreshed himself with a handful of dates and a draught of water; after which he sent his winged steed along at his best pace, till he reached the territories of the mighty empire of Nubia. This flourishing realm was governed by the Christian Emperor Senapo, whom the Europeans called Prester John, and who ruled over more than a hundred powerful negro tribes and nations.

Now Astulf had often heard of the fame of this Prester John, who was celebrated as a wise and virtuous ruler, and he was very anxious to visit the Court of so renowned an Emperor. So he brought his Hippogrif down to earth in the chief city of the Nubian Empire, and requested the first negro he met to show him the way to the palace. When he came thither he bade the servants say that the English Duke Astulf, a Paladin of France, craved an audience of the Emperor; and immediately he was led into the great hall where Prester John received his guests. There he saw an old man of noble and reverend mien seated on a throne of ivory and gold, who welcomed him kindly and asked him the latest news from Europe. So Astulf told him about the war between Charlemagne and King Agramant, and they spent more than an hour in pleasant and friendly conversation. But as time went on and the hour of dinner drew near the old Emperor became very sorrowful, and said with a deep sigh: "Sir Knight, I would fain give you such entertainment as you deserve, and I have commanded my servants to spread a rich banquet in your honour; but I greatly fear that all their trouble will be in vain; for I am plagued with a brood of loathsome harpies, who snatch all the food from my table and carry it off through the air, so that I and my servants can never take our meals in peace, but are obliged to swallow a mouthful by stealth whenever an opportunity offers." At this Astulf was greatly amazed, and exclaimed: "It grieves me, Sir Emperor, to think that so great and good a Prince should not be able to eat and drink merrily in his own palace; but I have that by my side which I hope will rid you for ever of your persecutors." Prester John supposed that he meant his sword, and

answered sadly: "Alas! my son, these harpies are proof against the keenest steel." But Astulf said: "Take comfort, Sir Emperor, for I have a more powerful remedy than the sword; wherefore let the dinner be served, I pray you, and bid your grooms bring my Hippogrif saddled and bridled into the banqueting-hall. Also you must stuff your ears carefully with wax so that you may not be able to hear the loudest noise, and order all your people to do the like, and then I promise you these creatures shall never return to plague you." So the Emperor commanded his servants to do as Astulf had said, and they all went together into the banqueting-hall.

As soon as the Emperor, his courtiers, servants, and subjects, had all closed their ears with wax, the Duke gave the signal to uncover the dishes and sit down to the splendid feast. Forthwith a rushing sound of wings was heard outside, and the harpies flew through the windows into the hall. They were seven in number and the most loathsome objects in all the world. Their heads and necks were those of women, the ugliest you can imagine; while in all the rest they were like frightful and enormous vultures; and they smelt—pah! you never knew anything so horrible as the smell of them. Astulf gave them no time to attack the victuals, but seized his marvellous horn and soon played them out of the place to the tune of "Over the hills and far away." At the very first note of that terrible instrument the loathsome harpies turned tail, much to the astonishment of the Emperor and his servants, who could not hear the sound because of the wax that stopped their ears. Then Astulf leaped upon the Hippogrif and pursued the harpies out of the window and over the city, playing all the while upon his horn, and laughing to see the scared monsters flap their great wings faster and faster in the vain endeavour to get out of earshot. Louder and louder he played as he chased them far beyond old Prester John's dominions; and so great was their terror that they flew frantically on to the end of the world, where they toppled over the edge and have never been heard of since. But Astulf returned laughing to the Emperor's

palace, and helped his grateful host to demolish the first hearty meal he had been able to enjoy for twenty years.

As you may suppose, the Emperor's thankfulness knew no bounds, and he begged Astulf to name any recompense he chose, saying: "Whatsoever you ask I will freely give it you and count myself still your debtor for so great a service." But Astulf answered: "Sir Emperor, I pray you delay the granting of your favours for a few days, seeing that I am minded to go to-morrow to the summit of the mountains of the moon, whither no man has ever been able to ascend before me. But when I have been thither I will return to you again, and ask of you a boon which shall be for your honour and mine, and for the great advantage of all Christendom." So Prester John promised that he would perform the Duke's request whatever it might be and whenever he should see fit to make it; and Astulf set off the next morning to fly up the mountains of the moon, which formed one boundary of the Nubian Empire, as a map of Africa will show you.

It was true that no man had ever ascended to their top; for the crags were so steep that neither man nor beast could climb them, and so high that the very birds of the air could scarcely hope to soar to their summit. But the Hippogrif was far stronger than any bird, and Astulf had no doubt that he would bear him safely to the mountain top. In this he was not disappointed, for the winged steed soared up so high that the tall palm-trees beneath him looked no bigger than bunches of fern; but a thick belt of clouds still stretched above his head and shrouded the summit from his view. Nothing daunted, Astulf flew higher and higher, till at length he rose above the very clouds, and saw before him a level table-land which formed the top of this wonderful mountain chain. Here he dismounted, and found to his astonishment that the climate was as warm and balmy as a June day at home, while the whole table-land was laid out as a lovely garden, in which grew flowers and fruits more beautiful than any in the world. Nothing that I could say would give you the faintest idea

of the marvellous charm of this garden, in the centre of which rose a stately palace of the purest ivory, large enough to shelter a nation of kings within its walls, and ornamented throughout with carving more exquisite than that of an Indian casket.

While Astulf was gazing on this scene of splendour he was approached by a man of noble and courteous aspect, dressed in the toga of an ancient Roman, and bound about the brows with a laurel chaplet, who gave him grave and kindly salutation, saying: "Hail, noble Sir Duke, and marvel not that I know who you are, or that I expected you to-day in these gardens. For this is the Earthly Paradise, where poets have their dwelling after death; and I am the Mantuan VIRGIL, who sang the deeds of Æneas, and was the friend of the wise Emperor Augustus. But if you wish to know the reason of your coming hither, it is appointed for you to get back the lost wits of the peerless Count Roland, who is gone mad for love of Angelica, and whose senses have been put away in the moon among the rest of the earth's missing rubbish. Now the mountains on the top of which we stand are called the Mountains of the Moon, because they are the only place from which an ascent to the moon is possible; and this very night I intend to guide you thither on your errand. But first, I pray you, take your dinner with us in our palace, for you have need of refreshment to prepare you for so strange a journey." I need hardly tell you that Astulf was delighted at being chosen to go to the moon on so worthy a mission, and thanked the noble poet a thousand times for his courtesy and kindness. But Virgil answered: "It is a pleasure to be of any service to such valiant warriors as Count Roland and yourself;" and thereupon he took the Duke through the shady alleys to the ivory palace which stood in the midst of the garden.

They passed through the magnificent entrance-hall into a splendid chamber, where they found a great company of poets assembled; and Virgil told Astulf that this was the ante-room where they waited for their King to lead the way into the refectory. Presently there was a murmur, "The

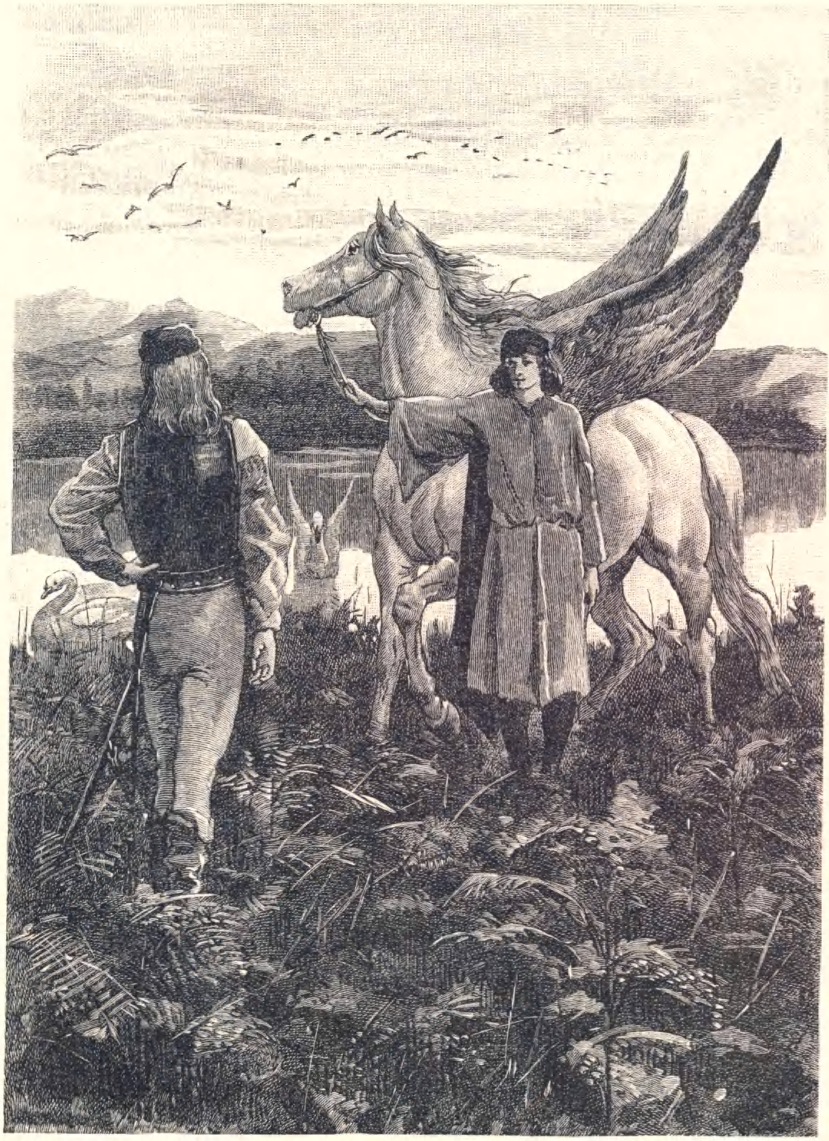
King! the King!" the great doors of the refectory were thrown open, and the company of poets ranged themselves in two rows, while their King passed down between their ranks. He was a majestic old man with curly beard and hair, and his broad forehead was furrowed with lines that betokened a life of noble thought; but alas! he was totally blind, and leaned upon the shoulder of a beautiful Greek youth who guided him. Every head was bowed reverently as he passed, and Virgil whispered to his guest: "That is HOMER, the Father and King of poets."

At the end of the refectory was a daïs with a table at which Homer took his seat, while another long table stretched down the middle of the hall; but Astulf saw with surprise that three places were laid on the upper board, though the King was apparently to sit there alone. But Virgil explained the reason, and said: "You must understand, Sir Duke, that it is our custom to lay a place for every poet who will ever ascend to this Earthly Paradise; and as yet there is none here worthy to sit beside our Father Homer. But after some five hundred and fifty years the seat at his left hand will be taken by the Florentine DANTE, who will find here the rest and happiness denied to him in his lifetime. The place on the right of the King, however, will remain vacant three hundred years more; but then it will be filled by a countryman of your own, and SHAKSPEARE will receive the honour due to him as the third great poet of the world." With these words Virgil took his seat at the head of the lower table, and motioned Astulf to an empty place at his right hand, saying: "This seat also will remain a long while vacant, being kept for another of your countrymen, who will come hither after more than a thousand years. He will be reviled and slandered in his lifetime; but after his death the very fools who abused him will pretend to admire and understand him, while here among his brethren he will be welcomed with joy and high honour." So Astulf sat in the seat of SHELLEY at the right hand of Virgil, and made a hearty dinner off nectar and ambrosia, "which are mighty fine victuals," as he afterwards told his friends at home; "but a

beefsteak and a pint of porter at the Cock are more to my liking."

After the dinner our Duke took a few hours' sleep; but at midnight Virgil woke him, and said: "The moon is full to-night and stands straight above our heads; now, therefore, it is time for us to depart, and I have ordered Pegasus, the winged steed of poets, to be in readiness, seeing that even your Hippogrif could not perform this flight." So Astulf followed his guide out of the ivory palace, and mounted behind him on the back of Pegasus, who flew straight upwards through the air, and in five minutes landed them in the moon.

They dismounted in a meadow watered by a broad and deep river, on the banks of which were gathered innumerable flocks of gulls and jackdaws, while three or four swans swam majestically about the middle of the stream. Presently there came running to the bank a wizened but active old man with a canvas bag slung upon his shoulder, from which he took out bundle after bundle of papers, each with a man's name written upon it in large and legible letters. These papers he flung into the stream, and immediately the gulls and jackdaws flew screaming down to snatch at them and pull them to pieces with their beaks and claws, so that nearly all the papers were quickly torn into shreds, and their fragments scattered to the winds. But a few were saved from destruction by the beautiful swans, who took them up reverently in their beaks and carried them to the shelter of a neighbouring temple. Astulf was eager to know the meaning of so strange a sight; for he said: "Many a time have I seen birds fight for a crumb of bread or a morsel of meat, but what can induce them to struggle so over strips of useless paper?" And Virgil answered him, and said: "You must know, Sir Duke, that everything which happens on earth has its counterpart here in the moon; and the papers which you see represent the names of the men who die there below, which are taken away by the old man Time to be cast into the river Oblivion. The gulls and jackdaws answer to the crowds of ignorant and malicious men who help Time to destroy the reputations of



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the dead; but the swans are the poets and historians who rescue the worthiest names from Oblivion, and lay them reverently in the temple of Immortality. The swans, in truth, are very few in number compared with the countless swarm of gulls and jackdaws, but they are enough for the work they have to do, seeing that only a very few names are worthy to be saved from the general destruction."

Now when they had looked on for a while at this notable sight they left the river Oblivion and proceeded to the valley of Lost Lumber, where the object of their errand was to be found. It was a long though narrow valley shut in between two lofty mountain ridges, and in it were stored away all the things which men lose or waste on earth. Here they found an infinite number of lovers' sighs, beyond which lay the useless moments lost at the gaming-tables, and the long wasted leisure of ignorant and idle men. Next came the vain desires and foolish wishes that can never take effect, and these were heaped together in such quantities that they blocked up the greater part of the valley. Here, too, were mountains of gold and silver which foolish politicians throw away in bribing voters to return them to Parliament; a little farther on was an enormous pile of garlands with steel gins concealed among their flowers, which Virgil explained to be flatteries; while a heap of grasshoppers which had burst themselves in keeping up their shrill, monotonous chirp, represented, he said, the dedications and addresses which servile authors used to write in praise of unworthy patrons. In the middle of the valley lay a great pool of spilt broth, and this signified the alms which rich men are too selfish to give away in their lifetime but bequeath to charities in their wills, to be paid out of money they can no longer use. Next Astulf came upon numbers of beautiful dolls from Paris, which little girls throw aside because they prefer their dear old bundles of rags with beads for eyes; and one of the biggest hillocks in all the place was formed of a pile of knives lost out of careless schoolboys' pockets. In fact, if I tried to tell you everything that our Englishman found in this Valley of Lost Lumber I should want more paper and ink than all the

stationers in London can supply; for there was not a single thing which you can imagine, except one, of which he did not find a goodly quantity among those endless piles of rubbish. Only there was not a particle of folly to be found there, because folly is the one thing of which men keep a tight hold, and which they never allow to leave the earth where it inhabits.

Our travellers had to go to the very end of the long valley before they reached the object of their search; but at last they came to an enormous cavern, in which the lost wits of mankind were stored in green glass bottles. Never was seen so vast or so well stocked a cellar; for here was a bottle for every man, woman, and child on earth, some greater and some smaller, according to the amount of sense which their owners received at birth. And some of them were half full of wits, some a quarter, and others three-quarters or more; so that by measuring here the quantity of wits which each man had lost, and doing a very easy little sum in subtraction, you could tell to a tittle how much of his portion still remained to him. Now the wits were a kind of sweet-scented ether, very apt to exhale if not kept tightly corked; and each of the green bottles bore a label with the name of the man to whom it belonged. Astulf found his own bottle rather more than half full, and this did not much surprise him, for he had never made pretension to any great stock of wisdom. But he was much more astonished at reading the names of several persons who had great repute in the world for unfailing cleverness; while here you could see by the state of their bottles that they had lost three-quarters of such wits as they ever possessed. Indeed, there was not a single empty bottle in the whole collection; for there never lived a man so prudent as not to lose at least a part of his sense in the course of his time on earth. Some are robbed of it by love, and others by rancorous hate; one man throws it away in the pursuit of place and power, another in ignoble greed of gain; some lose it by believing everything they hear, and others by putting faith in nobody. In a word, men have numberless methods of scattering their wits, and are all

alike only in managing to get quit of them. But Astulf found that the fullest bottles were those of astrologers and their dupes, for these are the silliest people in all the world.

Now when he had done looking about him and remarking the bottles that belonged to his friends and comrades, he took his own up by the neck, as Virgil permitted and advised him, and drawing out the cork clapped the mouth of the bottle to his nostrils. Very soon the missing wits were all sniffed up his nose and returned to their proper place in his brain; and from that moment the jovial Duke became much wiser than he had been for many a long year before. Then he took up the biggest bottle of all, which bore the name of Roland in letters three inches long upon its label; and this was full to the very cork, because its owner had lost all his wits through his love for the beautiful Angelica. Astulf found Roland's bottle much heavier than he expected, so solid had formerly been the wisdom of the peerless Count; but he tucked it away comfortably under his arm and prepared to follow Virgil out of the cavern. They returned by the way that they came, through the Valley of Lost Lumber to the banks of the river Oblivion, where they found Pegasus quietly grazing in the meadow. So they jumped upon his back and bade good-bye to the moon and all its wonders, and five minutes afterwards the winged steed had landed them safe at home again in the gardens of the Earthly Paradise.

PART IV.

THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

HOW RAYNALD WAS SENT INTO BRITAIN AND SAVED THE LIFE OF THE SCOTCH KING'S DAUGHTER.

ONCE more, and "positively for the last time," as the play-bills say, I must take you back to the very beginning of our history. You remember how the Emperor Charlemagne retreated upon Paris after losing the battle of the Pyrenees; how he and his army shut themselves up within the walls; and how King Agramant led the Saracen forces to besiege them there. Well, the Emperor considered the great multitude of his enemies, and decided that he must reinforce his own army with fresh soldiers, or he would certainly be overpowered in the long run. So the first thing he did on arriving in Paris was to summon Bradamante's brother, the fiery Raynald, into his presence, and charge him to go as his ambassador into Britain to levy troops there for the succour of the beleaguered city. The King of England also, who remained with the Emperor in Paris, gave Raynald letters of authority to act as his lieutenant and summon all the able-bodied men in England to join his standard. And Raynald, though sorry to miss any of the fighting, was well pleased to be entrusted with so honourable a commission, and set himself straightway to do the Emperor's bidding.

So he buckled on his armour and girded his sword Fusberta to his side; then he set the famous helmet of Mambrino on his head, and mounted his noble charger Bayard, and so set out alone on the road to Calais. There he chartered a ship for his passage, and insisted on putting

to sea at once against the advice of the captain and all the crew, who warned him in vain that the state of the weather was very dangerous. Sure enough they had not sailed a league beyond the harbour before they found it impossible to make any head against the storm, and turned to regain the port from which they started. But even this was now denied them, for the furious wind caught their vessel, driving her into the German Ocean and up along the eastern coast of England. Luckily the ship was a strong one, or she must have foundered in the raging sea; while, even as it was, her timbers were grievously strained and she ran helplessly before the wind for two days. At last the gale abated so far that the crew were able to steer for shore; and taking their bearings, they found that they were off the coast of Scotland. Accordingly, they ran into the harbour of Aberdeen, where they docked their ship and set about repairing her damages.

But Raynald thought it best to travel overland into England; so he mounted on Bayard and took the southern road. All day he rode through a vast and gloomy pine forest, till he came about sunset to a lonely monastery, where he asked a lodging for the night, and the monks received him gladly with great hospitality, setting meat and wine before him to refresh him after his day's journey. Now when Raynald had eaten and drunk he told the monks of his errand, saying: "I am bound for England to raise troops for the succour of the Emperor in his warfare against the Saracens, and I think to ask help from the King of Scotland too; but tell me, I pray you, if you know of any enterprise proper for me to undertake by the way whereby I may gain honour and renown in the world." And the monks answered him: "Truly if you will go to St. Andrews, where our King is now holding his Court, you will find just such an enterprise as a gallant knight may rejoice to essay. For the beautiful Princess Guenever, the only daughter of our King, is sorely in need of a champion to maintain her innocence. She stands accused of having made a secret marriage with Poliness, Duke of Albany, without the consent of her father; and by our Scotch laws a maiden who

thus neglects the deference due to her parents' authority must suffer the penalty of death. Now, therefore, a very valiant knight, Sir Lurcan by name, has accused the Princess of this crime, saying that with his own eyes he beheld the wedding; and the Duke of Albany, who is reputed to be her husband, denies it not; but the Princess vehemently protests her innocence, vowing that she never suffered the Duke as a suitor, and would rather die than become his wife; and the King her father would fain believe her story and save her life. Sir Lurcan, however, abides by his accusation, which he offers to prove by ordeal of battle; wherefore Guenever is doomed to die unless some champion appears within the month to uphold her cause. Alas! her brother, Prince Zerbin, is still in the land of Spain and knows nothing of his sister's peril; so that it seems as though she would nowhere find a champion. Yet if her innocence be established, the King promises to give her in marriage with a rich dowry to the knight who offers himself as her defender, whosoever he be; and this is such an adventure as well beseems a brave and gentle knight."

"What!" cried Raynald in amazement, when the monks had finished their story, "can there be a law so barbarous as to doom a fair damsel to death merely for pleasing herself in choice of a husband? Truly I care not whether the Princess Guenever be wife or maid; but I will uphold her cause with all my might. I pray you therefore, pious brethren, let one of your servants attend me to guide me on my way, for I am impatient to come to the encounter."

The good monks were delighted with Raynald's boldness, and promised that a squire should be ready to attend him on the morrow. So the next morning the Paladin set out with his guide, and took his way through the forest towards St. Andrews. Presently they left the highroad to take a shorter path; and they had not gone far along it before they heard a woman's voice screaming for help, and saw a very beautiful maiden struggling to escape from a couple of ruffians, who seemed on the point of murdering her. But as soon as Raynald spurred to the rescue the scoundrels fled away into the wood, and left their intended

victim unhurt. Then Raynald bade his squire take the maiden on the pillion behind him, and said to her: "Fair damsel, I pray you be content to tell me your history as we ride, for I have no leisure to loiter by the way." And after thanking him for his timely succour, the maiden answered: "Verily, Sir Knight, I will tell you all the truth, though my words will unfold such a tale of villainy as an honourable man can scarcely believe. I am called Dalinda, and I was the friend and chief lady of the beautiful Princess Guenever, who is now brought in peril of her life by a false accusation. The matter befell in this wise: Poliness, Duke of Albany, was long a suitor for the hand of the Princess; but she was resolute in rejecting his offers, having set her affections on a noble young knight, Sir Ariodant by name, the handsomest and bravest warrior in all Scotland. Him she promised to marry as soon as she could obtain the King's consent; and Duke Poliness, finding that he could not prevail to change her determination, resolved to take a deadly revenge upon her. So he secretly paid his court to me, pretending that his love for the Princess was quite at an end, and that he would have no other lady in the world but me; and I, foolish girl that I was, believed all that he said and loved him with my whole heart. One day he came to me and told me that at last he had found an occasion for accomplishing our desires, and that the same night he would marry me in the little chapel beyond the walls; but our marriage, he said, must be secret, for he could not yet proclaim me openly as his wife. Also he bade me apparel myself in a magnificent gown which Guenever had lately given me out of her own wardrobe, and put on a wreath and veil of hers which I could easily take for the occasion; for he said that as he could not and would not wed a Princess, he wished at least that his bride should be royally dressed. Little dreaming for what end he made his request, and suspecting anything rather than treachery in my lover, I joyfully prepared myself for the secret marriage, and promised to do in everything as he desired. Then the traitor having got my promise, went straight to the noble Sir Ariodant, and upbraided him with

continuing his suit to the Princess, saying: 'Have you not professed yourself my friend, Sir Ariodant? And is it a friendly act to plague the Princess with your suit when you know that I am her chosen lover? Surely you ought to give way to me who am your friend, even as I would give way to you if Guenever had chosen you for her husband.' At this Ariodant grew very wroth, protesting that the Princess had promised to marry none but him, and that Poliness must be out of his senses to imagine himself first in her favour. But the false Duke only shrugged his shoulders, and said: 'Promise me to keep my secret and I will give you sure proof of what I say.' And when Ariodant promised, he added: 'Take your stand to-night near the little chapel beyond the walls and you will see me secretly wedded to the Princess.'

"Now Sir Ariodant was resolved to discover the truth of this matter; but he knew that Duke Poliness was a treacherous man, and feared that he was trying to lure him into an ambush. So he determined to take with him his brother Sir Lurcan, whom he trusted as his second self, to help him in case he should be attacked; and having bound over his brother by a vow to reveal nothing of what he should hear and see, he went with him at midnight to the little chapel. Thither came also the false Duke Poliness; and thither came I, dressed in Guenever's apparel, and looking exactly like her in the dim moonlight, for we happen to be of the same height and complexion, so that any one might suppose us to be sisters. And there I was married to the Duke, while Ariodant and Lurcan, as well as the priest of the chapel, imagined that he was wedding the Princess Guenever.

"This fancied discovery of his lady's falseness so wrought upon Sir Ariodant that he left the Court next day without a word to any of his friends; and shortly afterwards it was rumoured that he had drowned himself in the sea. All the Court was amazed at the terrible news, knowing not what to think; but Sir Lurcan was beside himself with grief, so that he forgot his vow of silence, and accused the Princess as the murderess of his brother; 'for,' he said, 'Ariodant

and I saw her secretly married to the Duke of Albany; and it is her treachery which has driven my brother to his death.' The King was terribly grieved at Sir Lurcan's accusation, which he was fain to disbelieve; but the knight threw down his glove upon the floor, and declared himself ready to maintain the truth of his words against any one who would take up his gage. Then the King had no choice but to sentence his unhappy daughter to death, unless some knight should come within a month to prove her innocence in combat against Sir Lurcan. This was just what the cruel Duke Poliness wanted; but he feared lest, when I came to hear of what had passed, I should reveal the truth of the matter, and thus his vengeance would come to nothing. So before any rumour of it reached my ears he had me removed from the Court to one of his castles; and finding that even there I had chanced to hear the truth, he hired those ruffians to murder me in this lonely wood, thinking that my death would rid him of a wife whom he loves not, and would make his vengeance sure."

The noble Raynald was delighted to find from Dalinda's long story that the Princess Guenever was entirely blameless, and with more ardour than ever he vowed to maintain her cause. So he made all the haste he could, and arrived the next morning with his squire and Dalinda at St. Andrews. There they found the city quite deserted, except by a few children and aged folks; and on inquiring the reason they were informed that all the people had gone to see a fight in the lists outside the farther gate. For a knight had unexpectedly appeared, clad from head to foot in plain black armour, bearing no device upon his shield, and refusing to show his face or tell his name; but offering himself as a champion to uphold the beautiful Guenever's innocence against Sir Lurcan.

Just then a distant flourish of trumpets announced that the King had taken his seat upon the throne overlooking the lists; and Raynald perceived that he had not a moment to lose if he would arrive in time to explain the rights of the matter. So he left Dalinda at an inn within the city, and hastened off, followed by his squire, to the battlefield.

There he found a great multitude assembled, breathlessly watching the two champions, who were engaged in a fiercely-contested battle. At present neither could claim much advantage over the other; but the stranger in the black armour seemed rather the more skilful swordsman of the two, and the spectators had some reason to hope that his prowess would establish the innocence of their Princess. Raynald, however, came galloping up on Bayard, who easily cleared himself a passage through the crowd, till he arrived at the foot of the throne. There the Paladin reined in his charger, and making a courteous obeisance to the King, cried: "Sir King, as you value justice and right, stop this combat on the instant; for I tell you that if either champion be slain he will fall a victim to a traitor's cunning."

The King was much astonished at the interruption; but seeing that Raynald bore himself like a gallant knight he ordered the combatants to separate instantly; and when they stood apart he said: "Sir Knight, I think you know well that it is a shameful thing to stay two champions from their battle save upon just and weighty cause. Declare your name, therefore, and explain to us the reasons for which you bid this contest cease." "Prithee, Sir King," answered the Paladin, "suffer me to keep my visor down and my name a secret till I have proved the truth of what I am about to relate to you. I tell you that Sir Lurcan has been deceived by the plots of a traitor, and through no fault of his own he is mistaken in supposing that he saw the Princess Guenever married by stealth to a husband against the laws of this realm. And I say also that the knight of the black armour knows not the truth of the cause which he maintains; but you and the Princess, with these champions and all the people of this land, are victims of the treachery devised by Poliness, Duke of Albany." And thereupon he told the King everything in order as he had heard it from the mouth of Dalinda, adding that he had left the maiden in the city, and would produce her, if required, to confirm his story. "But first," he cried, "I proclaim Poliness, Duke of Albany, a liar and a traitor, and I challenge him to make good his cause against me in

battle, whereof there is my gage;" and with these words he flung down his gauntlet on the ground.

Duke Poliness had grown livid with baffled rage while Raynald was giving his narrative; for he perceived that his villainies were come to light, and that his wicked scheme of vengeance against the Princess would be brought to naught. He would not confess his infamy, however, without one last struggle to make his falsehoods pass for truth; so he forced himself to take up the Paladin's glove, though his hand was trembling with fear, and cast it in the face of his challenger, exclaiming that his story was the vilest of lies. Nothing but bloodshed could atone for so gross an insult, and without more ado the false Duke and his accuser prepared themselves for battle.

At the first sound of the trumpets they took up their position, each at his own end of the lists; at the second they saluted the King and the ladies of his Court; but as the notes of the third blast died away they laid their lances in the rest and rushed forward at full gallop to the encounter. Not for an instant was the issue doubtful, for the Duke's lance glanced harmless from Raynald's buckler; but the fiery Paladin drove his weapon half its length through the traitor's body, so that he bore him off his horse and laid him dying on the grass. Then he seized him by the arm and dragged him to the King's throne, where he cried: "Say, hast thou lied in this matter?" And with his last breath the wretch confessed: "I have lied indeed, and the truth is as you said to the King."

Then a great shout rent the air; for the people dearly loved the gracious Princess Guenever, and hated Poliness, who had long been reputed cruel and greedy of gain. But the grateful King turned to the conqueror, thanking him with tears in his eyes for having proved his sweet daughter innocent, and beseeching him that now at length he would raise his visor and declare his name before them all. So Raynald lifted up his visor and uncovered his face, whereupon he was known at once to the King and to many of his Thanes, who had consorted with him of old in the realm of France, and now rejoiced greatly that he was come to

grace their land with deeds of valour. And when the rumour spread among the people that it was Raynald the Paladin who had defeated the villainous plots of Poliness, they fell to shouting anew for joy, crying: "Long live the fiery Raynald! Long live the famous house of Clairmont!"

All this while the knight of the black armour had been standing by the side of Sir Lurcan, his former adversary, at the foot of the King's throne; and everybody marvelled who he could be that had risked his life in a quarrel of which he knew not the truth. At length upon the King's entreaty he also uncovered his head, when lo! he was seen to be the gallant Sir Ariodant himself, the true lover of Princess Guenever, who had not really drowned himself in the sea, as the King and all the Court believed. He had only withdrawn himself into the wilderness, where he might bear his grief in solitude; but happening to hear of his lady's danger he had come back to defend her at the peril of his life against his own brother, even though he believed all the while that she had been false to her vows of love for him.

Now when the King looked upon the face of this gallant knight, and considered all the matter, he said within himself: "Where shall I find a more loyal and worthy husband for my daughter than this her champion? Can any man give proof of greater love than Sir Ariodant has given? I trow not." So he sent for the beautiful Guenever, who had remained all day within the palace, bidding her come attended by all her ladies to the lists. And as soon as she appeared he solemnly betrothed her to her trusty knight, saying: "Though I searched the whole earth through I could nowhere find a nobler son-in-law." Moreover, since Duke Poliness was dead without an heir, the King entered into possession of his duchy, with all the broad lands and fiefs appertaining to it; and he presently bestowed the whole on Sir Ariodant as a rich dowry for his royal wife. Thus the gallant Sir Ariodant became Duke of Albany and wedded the faithful and beautiful Princess Guenever, at which there was great joy throughout all Scotland, with such marriage festivities as had never been seen there before.

But the King could not be satisfied without giving Raynald also some recompense for the service he had done him, and entreated him to ask whatsoever he desired and it should be granted him. So Raynald begged the King's free pardon for Dalinda, who had been decoyed into doing mischief by Poliness, and had no idea that she was compassing the ruin of her mistress. To which the King made answer: "Her pardon is granted already, Sir Raynald, seeing that she was innocent of any guilty purpose. Ask therefore some other boon, I pray you, for this is no favour but only justice that you have demanded." Then Raynald said that both as a boon to himself and also as a service due to all Christendom, he would ask the King to send troops with him to the succour of the Emperor Charlemagne. And the King willingly promised to do as he desired, and kept his promise faithfully, as you will hear in a future chapter.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE SARACENS ASSAULTED PARIS, AND OF THE DEEDS OF RODOMONT.

WHILE Raynald was absent on his mission to Britain neither Christians nor Saracens were idle under the walls of Paris. King Agramant had brought thither all his army only a few days after Charlemagne passed safely through the gates, but not before the prudent Emperor had had time to put the walls in thorough repair and to strengthen every weak point in the fortifications. Day and night the workmen and soldiers toiled side by side, taking it in turns to labour and sleep by companies at a time, so that the work never ceased altogether for a moment. And they were all well rewarded for their pains; for when the Saracen hosts appeared before the place they found themselves in front of the strongest fortifications in the world. The river Seine, as I daresay you know, flows through the heart of the city; and in the middle of its stream is an island, on which the glorious cathedral is built. Then, as now, this island formed the central part of Paris; but at that time there were only two other divisions of the town, built one on each bank of the Seine, and each protected by a wall in the shape of a half-moon with its horns resting on the river. These outer walls were of great height and very strongly built, but they were not the only defence on which the Emperor could rely. For they were encompassed by a wide ditch filled with water six feet deep; and within them was a second circuit of fortifications still stronger than the outer ring. This second circuit consisted of an immense moat, the like

of which had never been seen for depth or width, and from the inner bank of which rose another wall of solid stone-work, broad and high, and crowned by a ring of strong square towers at intervals of fifty feet apart. Lastly, across the river, where it passed between the walls, Charlemagne had hung great chains of iron, guarded by companies of crossbowmen stationed upon the banks, so that the enemy might not be able to steal into the city by boat.

No wonder that the Saracens fought shy for a while of attacking a town so strongly defended. For many weeks there occurred no regular battle between the armies, though there were skirmishes almost every day. For often a party of knights would issue from the gates, and make a raid on the Pagan encampment; or a company of one army would challenge an equal number of the other to combat in the lists; so that the warriors in either camp found no lack of fighting ready to their hands. But at last, just after Roland had routed the two squadrons commanded by Alzird and Manilard, King Agramant resolved to make a grand attack, to which he was the more encouraged by hearing that the peerless Count was no longer among the defenders of the town. First he held a great review of all his troops, calling in those who had their camp at a distance, and assigning to each nation its position in the assault, which he purposed to deliver on the morrow.

The next morning every man was at his post, so that all the plain for many miles round seemed alive with the hordes of Saracens. Don't ask me to tell you how many they were; for you might as well try to count the stars that sparkle in the sky on a frosty December night, or the drops of the foam that dashes over Eddystone lighthouse in a storm, as attempt to number the troops, drawn from every quarter of the globe, who gathered under the standard of King Agramant to the assault of Paris. But among them all the men of Algiers were appointed to lead the van, under the command of their King, the gigantic Rodomont. He was clad in the dragon's hide which he wore for armour, and his standard was a blood-red banner, on which was emblazoned the figure of a tawny lion suffering himself to

be bridled by a gentle damsel. By this device the terrible King meant to signify his own willing submission to his lady and promised bride, the beautiful Princess Doralis; for he knew not as yet that she had been carried off by Mandricard the Tartar, but imagined that in a few days she would arrive in the camp to be wedded to himself and crowned queen over his sovereignty of Algiers. So he girded himself joyously for battle, confident in his mighty valour, and exclaiming with a boastful laugh: "To-day we burn Paris town, and to-morrow all Europe will be ours!"

Meanwhile the city within was alive with the stir and bustle of preparation; the churches were thronged by crowds of women and old men, while all those of an age to bear arms were ordered to man the walls and help in repelling the assault. Some were told off to prepare caldrons of boiling water, or coils of rope smeared with tar and pitch, to throw down upon the head of the enemy if he attempted to scale the walls; to others was given the office of managing the Greek fire; others again had charge of great catapults made to discharge volleys of enormous stones. Carefully and skilfully the great Emperor marshalled all his men, putting the greater number at the posts most likely to be threatened, but leaving no corner unguarded at which any danger could possibly arise.

The battle was begun by a party of skirmishers thrown forward to attack the Saracen vanguard; but these light troops soon proved no match for King Rodomont and his Algerians. So after harassing the enemy a little in his advance, they presently retreated behind the outer circuit of defence, breaking down the bridges over the ditch as soon as they had passed them. Here the Saracens were brought to a halt in front of the ditch, and had to set about bridging it with a quantity of planks which they had brought on their shoulders for the purpose. But the work was no easy one; for the men on the walls threw the coils of flaming rope over their necks, while the catapults shot volleys of missiles into the midst of them, so that great numbers had been slain before a single plank could be laid. The terrible Rodomont was wild with fury at this delay, and

determined to cross the ditch at all hazards. So he leaped down into it and waded through to the other side; and so huge was his stature that the water barely came up to his armpits, though it was deep enough to drown the tallest of his followers. Covered with mud from top to toe the giant took his stand at the foot of the wall, and shouted to his men to bring the scaling-ladders across as best they could. By this time they had managed to get a couple of planks laid side by side, on which the foremost of the soldiers rushed across in spite of all that the French could do to hinder them. But many more of them were killed in trying to get the scaling-ladders into position, and many times the ladders were thrown down before a man could reach the top. However, when the Christian leaders saw that their enemies had now crossed the ditch by thousands, and came swarming on in ever-increasing numbers, they judged it most prudent to abandon the outer line of wall, and reserve their forces for the defence of the second circuit.

So they retreated behind the inner lines, breaking down all means of communication as they passed, and left the Saracens masters of the outer ring. Little profit did the Pagans reap from this first success, since they had now to assault far stronger fortifications than those they had won. Moreover, their planks were not long enough to stretch across the great moat, so that they must wade through it and scramble up the steep slippery bank before they could get to the foot of the wall beyond. And the Christians were more resolute than ever to oppose them, knowing that on the defence of these lines depended the fate of a whole division of their city. When they saw this, the foremost among Rodomont's troops shrank back and turned to retreat from the place; but the terrible King drove them on with threats and blows, even drawing his sword and slaying with his own hand a few who refused to obey him. And when he had driven down a great multitude, and forced them to struggle through the moat, he himself took a scaling-ladder on his back, and with a run and a jump sprang clear over the yawning chasm, alighting safely on the opposite bank. Never was seen such a wonderful leap;

for the moat was near forty feet wide, and Rodomont cleared it in full armour, with his sword drawn in his hand and the heavy ladder lashed upon his back. Yet he came down firmly and lightly on the ground, making no more noise than if his feet had been shod with felt.

Meanwhile the moat was becoming choked with soldiers, who followed their officers into its depths, but could not mount the sheer bank on the farther side. Then came the opportunity of the garrison on the city walls, and they hastened to use it for the utter destruction of their foes. For, fearing that some of the Pagans might soon be able to scramble up over the bodies of their comrades, they called for great caldrons of boiling oil, which they poured down all along the line into the moat, so that hundreds and thousands of the enemy died a horrible death by scalding. For the oil and the boiling water which was poured down along with it penetrated between the joints of their harness, so that they found no protection in armour, but the knight in full equipment died equally with the lightly-clad bowman. Also, when a great quantity of oil and water had been thrown down into the fosse, the garrison called for fire, and cast after it burning tar-barrels, faggots of dry sticks, and coils of lighted rope and straw smeared with pitch. These set all the oil in a blaze, so that the moat was one great sheet of fire from end to end, with a dense cloud of smoke rising up from it which seemed to darken the very sun, and every Saracen within it was quickly burnt to death.

Eleven thousand and twenty-eight of King Agramant's soldiers perished thus miserably in the flames, and those behind could no longer hope to cross the fiery ditch. Rodomont, too, would surely have met the same death if he had been clad in arms of mail like the rest, for the men on the ramparts took good care to aim more than one caldron of burning oil at his head. But his dragon's hide was all in one piece, without seam or joint through which the liquid could penetrate, and the scales of it were proof against the hottest flames. So he had only to guard his eyes and he was perfectly safe; besides, he gave the garrison little time for continuing their attack on him. Unstrapping

his ladder from his back, he quickly planted it against the wall, and had sprung to the top of it and on the very battlements before the French soldiers well knew what he was about.

Once there, he whirled his great sword round his head and dealt such blows as no skill could avail to parry. Four knights rushed together against him and strove to hurl him back from the wall; but he slew them all with a single sweep of his sword and leaped down into the streets of Paris. Terrible was the consternation of all who beheld him, for they knew by his armour of dragon's hide that it was Rodomont who had thus entered their city. Like a herd of deer when the savage tiger springs into their midst, the frightened populace fled in all directions; knights and squires, spearmen and archers, all rushed madly away from the gigantic King and dashed towards the centre of the town. But Rodomont was as swift to pursue as they to flee; a stroke of the sword accompanied his every footstep, and each stroke laid at least one victim in the dust. Presently great numbers of women, children, and old men were drawn into the stream of fugitives; and here the terrible Algerian showed the cruelty of his savage nature; for he discerned not between the soldiery, whom he might fairly slay, and the helpless folk, whom a noble warrior should have sought to spare, but blindly slaughtered all who came within his reach, mingling the blood of matrons and boys and feeble grandsires with that of the knights and warriors who were his enemies. Thus did one man fill a great part of Paris with wailing and lamentation and drive the whole population before him; so that if King Agramant and his captains could once have forced an entrance they would soon have been masters of the city.

Nor did the Saracen leader fail to make the attempt, for he led the chieftains of his host to one of the gates, which he hoped to find ill guarded through the confusion of Rodomont's assault. Followed by half a score of Pagan Kings and by many thousands of his troops, King Agramant moved to attack this entrance; but in place of a feeble garrison, he found himself face to face with the watchful

Charlemagne and the flower of his matchless chivalry. There were the King of England and the Duke of Bavaria, there was Ogier the Dane, with Otto and Berlingier, Oliver and Avolon, and many more of the famous Paladins, all eager to do their utmost under the eyes of the Emperor. No less impatient for the fray were the Saracen kings and leaders, who had hitherto done nothing but watch the efforts of Rodomont and his Algerians; and a great battle began forthwith for the possession of the city gate. Many knights and an enormous number of soldiers fell on both sides; but still the Pagans persevered in the attack and the Christians remained stubborn in defence, so that the strife raged fiercely for upwards of an hour, and yet no step of vantage had been won by the invaders. Then at last the struggle was ended by the arrival of unexpected help for the Christian forces, and King Agramant was forced to give up all hope of taking Paris by storm, and think rather of providing for his own safety. But the manner in which this great deliverance was achieved must form the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

HOW RAYNALD BROUGHT THE ENGLISH AND SCOTCH ARMIES TO THE HELP OF CHARLEMAGNE, AND OF THE VICTORY WHICH THEY GAINED.

ALL this while Raynald had not been idle for a moment, but had pushed on the provision of fresh troops as quickly as possible, knowing that every hour was precious. You have heard how fortunately his prowess had gained him great influence with the King of Scotland, which he immediately employed in persuading the King to send troops to the help of Charlemagne, and how the grateful monarch promised to act in everything as Raynald should advise him. The first thing he did in performance of his promise was to send off a courier whom he charged to recall his only son, Prince Zerbin, out of Spain, since he deemed it right and fitting that so great an expedition should be led by the heir to his throne. And Zerbin, as we know, obeyed the summons like a loyal knight, leaving his lovely Princess Isabella in Galicia rather than delay his return to Scotland. Next the King ordered a muster to be held of all the men in his dominions who were of an age to bear arms. The fiery cross, that ancient signal of gathering for war, was borne from end to end of the Highlands; while the Court heralds proclaimed in each lowland fief the King's command that every vassal should repair, without delay, but fully equipped for a campaign, to Edinburgh. There they presently assembled in such numbers as no other Scotch army could ever boast. There was every Highland clan, with its chieftain or his heir at its head; while side by side

with them were seen all the lairds of the lowlands, each followed by a goodly company of his vassals. Each division was fully armed according to its wont,—the kilted Highlanders with target and claymore, and the lowlanders in the gear of Southern nations, those of knightly rank being clad in panoply of mail and attended by their trusty squires, while the meaner sort served as spearmen and bowmen under them. But the general command of the army was given to the noble Prince Zerbin, who was subject to none save to Raynald alone; and Sir Ariodant, the new Duke of Albany, and his gallant brother, Sir Lurcan, were appointed lieutenants under the Prince to marshal the troops according to his bidding. Thus arrayed they set out from Edinburgh and marched all the way through England to Dover, where a fleet was in readiness to carry them over to France.

Meanwhile Raynald had gone on before them into England, where the Duke of Lancaster was governing as Regent in the King's absence. To him the Paladin showed the letters of authority which he had received from the King, and ordered all the nobles and knights of the realm to meet him at Dover, bringing their vassals and henchmen in their train. In this manner he gathered a second great army from England still more numerous than that which was now on the march from Edinburgh, in which were whole squadrons of gallant knights whose names it would take too long to tell you here, as well as great bodies of infantry, with our famous English archers at their head. The command of them was taken by the Duke of Lancaster himself, who was brother to the absent King; and next in authority under him were the Dukes of Gloucester, York, and Clarence, all princes of the royal house, together with the Earl of Warwick, who was the most powerful baron in the land.

Lastly, that each part of our country might have its share in this glorious enterprise, Raynald succeeded in obtaining a strong body of troops from Ireland, whom King Brian willingly sent to join the camp at Dover, as a proof of his loyalty and devotion to the Emperor.

As soon as they were all assembled Raynald lost no time in carrying them over the Straits in transport ships provided by the Duke of Lancaster; and as the weather was wonderfully fair, and there was no enemy at hand to oppose their landing, in an incredibly short time they had pitched their camp under the walls of Calais. The next day they struck their tents and took the road to Paris; and journeying by forced marches, they arrived within sight of the city just as Rodomont was raging inside it and King Agramant attacking its gate: in fact, thanks to Raynald's diligence and energy, they came up in the very nick of time, and long before Charlemagne and his besieged forces had ventured to expect their succour.

Seeing from afar off that a battle was engaged beneath the walls, Raynald threw a bridge over the Seine, by which all his army crossed to the southern side of the river, where the Saracen forces were drawn up. Then he disposed his troops in order of battle, giving to Prince Zerbin and his Scotchmen the honour of leading the attack along the river bank; the English army formed the centre of his line; while the Irishmen on the farther wing, who were fewer in number than the English and Scotch divisions, were ordered to make a circuit of several miles and fall upon the enemy's flank. After proving himself a skilful general by these masterly arrangements, the fiery Paladin left the execution of them to the commanders of divisions, and himself hastened forward to animate his followers by the example of his ardour in attack. Striking the spurs into Bayard, he dashed a bowshot ahead of the Scottish vanguard, with his lance laid ready in rest, as though each moment's delay in beginning the fight were an intolerable annoyance. Like the first black squall of wind that heralds the approach of a fearsome tempest, he galloped in front of all his forces towards the enemy; and at his onset the Pagans seemed to feel a presage of misfortune to come, so that the lances quivered in their hands, while their feet shook visibly in the stirrups and their thighs upon the saddles. Only King Pulian changed not countenance, being ignorant that it was Raynald who was coming against him; and little thinking

to encounter so doughty a foe, he set forward at full gallop to attack him. Both alike aimed their lances at the head, but very differently did they fare in the result; for Raynald passed on unhurt and left the Saracen King dead upon the ground. A like death befell the King of Oran, a Pagan chief of enormous bulk but of little skill or valour, whom Raynald pierced through shield and breast, though his stout lance broke in unhorsing the unwieldy body. The dead King's charger flung up his heels and careered across the field, thanking the conqueror, no doubt, in his heart for ridding him of his overgrown burden; but Raynald, seeing that his lance was splintered, turned Bayard's head where the press of Saracens was thickest, and laid about him with his famous sword Fusberta, which shivered the arms of mail as though they were brittle glass. And so vigorous were his blows that the enemy's vanguard was already put to flight, when Zerbin and his foremost Scotchmen came up to the attack.

Then began a fierce slaughter of the Saracens with little loss to the Christian knights, who profited well by the terror and bewilderment of their foes. Each Pagan seemed turned to ice, and each Scot to a consuming fire; for to the panic-stricken Africans it appeared as though every warrior in the Christian ranks was gifted with the force of Raynald. Indeed they would have perished altogether but for the exertions of the wise King Sobrin, who succeeded in rallying the bravest of them and bringing up fresh battalions to their support, thus maintaining the struggle against Raynald and Prince Zerbin till better help should come.

The succour he hoped for was not long delayed; for King Agramant soon heard of the peril of his army, and immediately quitted the city gate, which he had been assaulting for more than an hour, to hasten with all his warriors to the rescue. Then did the battle wax fierce and terrible indeed; for the courage of the Saracens revived when they found themselves reinforced by all the bravest of their leaders, and they struggled valiantly to check the advance of the British, who still pressed upon them as vigorously as before. Prince Zerbin in particular fought

with marvellous success, and was well seconded by the gallant brothers Sir Ariodant and Sir Lurcan, his lieutenants. For a moment he was placed in peril of his life, being assailed by three Saracen knights at once, one of whom with a basely-aimed stroke killed his charger under him, so that the brave young Prince found himself on foot in the midst of his enemies. But Ariodant and Lurcan rushed forward to the rescue, and placed themselves one on either side of their general, and the three made deadly havoc among the Africans. At the same time the English troops had joined battle with the Spaniards, and rivalled their brothers from Scotland in valour and success; the Dukes of Lancaster, York, and Clarence unhorsed and slew the Saracen chiefs who opposed them, and the Spanish line was forced to retreat with great loss before the onset of our gallant countrymen.

Meanwhile there was desolation within the walls of Paris, where the terrible Rodomont still bathed the streets in blood, and no man was yet found able to withstand him. But just as King Agramant turned to abandon the battle at the gates, a messenger came to Charlemagne, crying: "Sir Emperor, all your people are at the mercy of a single man, and if you check not his careeer the whole city will soon be lost to you and destroyed." Hearing this, the Emperor asked who it was that could do all this mischief; and when he knew that it was Rodomont King of Algiers, he summoned his Paladins round him and hastened to the scene of slaughter. There a piteous sight met his eyes; for not only had Rodomont slain every man, woman, and child that came within his reach, so that the ways were blocked with corpses, but in his fury he had set fire to the very houses, which in those days were mostly built of wood, and whole streets were wrapped in flames and clouds of smoke. The terrified populace still fled before him in hopeless confusion, till they came to a broad square where the Emperor and his train encountered them. Then Charlemagne lifted up his voice, and cried to the soldiers among them: "For shame! you that call yourselves warriors, and ere this have put to flight whole legions of the infidels; will you now

suffer a single foe to take your city?" But no exhortation could stay the panic among the soldiers, or persuade them to turn and face the terrible King. Then the Emperor exclaimed to those who accompanied him: "Forward now, Paladins of France, to the deliverance of this city and all Christendom." And thereat the Paladins laid their lances in rest, and spurred forward, each in his order, to meet the Saracen.

Ogier the Dane and Oliver, Otto and Berlingier, with many others beside, answered gladly to their Emperor's command; and Rodomont, when he saw them bearing down upon him one after the other, only shouted out boastfully: "Come all together if you will, and meet your deaths the sooner." But his vaunt availed him nothing against such foes as these, who were not to be turned from their purpose by idle words. Eight blows in succession did the wonderful armour of dragon's hide receive, and still its scales remained whole and sound, though the strokes were struck by eight of the mightiest champions in the world. None the less the terrible Algerian was brought to a halt at last, and had hard work to defend his life against these assailants. The common soldiers also, whom he had scattered in wild disorder but a moment before, began to pluck up heart when they saw him fearlessly resisted by their leaders; and turning back from their flight, the whole body of them encompassed him about as a pack of puppies encompasses the savage boar whom the huntsman and the old hounds have brought to bay. Thus hard pressed by a host of enemies, Rodomont was forced to give up all hope of taking Paris singlehanded by assault, and began to retreat slowly towards the river, fighting all the while, and keeping his face still turned towards his foes. Step by step they thrust him back, till they brought him at length to the foot of the western wall, where the Seine flows out of the city boundaries. There the terrible king suddenly sheathed his sword, and with a great leap plunged into the waters, swimming strongly down the stream in spite of the weight of his armour. Very soon he passed the line of the walls, and a few more strokes brought him to the bank beyond

them, on which he had no sooner landed than he heard such tidings as kept him far away from Paris and her besiegers for a while.

And now the fortune of the day turned all in favour of the Christians. For as soon as Rodomont was beaten back Charlemagne led the Paladins and a great host of soldiers out of the city and fell upon the flank of the African troops with whom King Agramant was opposing Raynald and his Scotch allies; and at the same moment the Irish troops came up and attacked the farther flank of the Saracens, where the Spaniards under King Marsilius were already hard pressed by the Duke of Lancaster and his gallant Englishmen. Thus the Pagans were taken in front and on both flanks at once, so that they were utterly unable to maintain the struggle any longer; at every point their common soldiers broke and fled, while their chivalry fought bravely on, though expecting every moment to be overwhelmed. At last, perceiving that all efforts to retrieve the day were hopeless, King Agramant gave orders for a general retreat to the camp; and thither he brought the greater part of his army in safety, though vast numbers were slain upon the way, and many were dispersed over the country in headlong flight before the victorious Christians. Indeed, if the daylight had lasted a little longer, more than half the Pagan army would have been annihilated; but night came on apace and stopped the victors in their pursuit, enabling whole squadrons of routed Africans and Spaniards to retreat unharmed within their lines. There they were safe for the present, for King Agramant, like a prudent general, had defended his encampment with earthworks and strong forts of every kind, so that a city could hardly be more difficult to storm. But though still able to make defence against their enemies, the Pagans were greatly fallen from their former fortune; for they, who but yesterday were besieging Paris, were now shut up and besieged in their own camp; while Charlemagne and the Christians, who had so lately trembled for the safety of their city, now established themselves boldly without the walls, and encompassed their beaten foes on every side.

Three cheers, then, for the fiery Raynald and his gallant allies from England, Scotland, and Ireland, who gained upon that day a victory as glorious as any in our country's history. For it was not merely the city of Paris that they saved from fearful danger, but all the lands of Christendom from the Tiber to the Forth were delivered by their valour in this battle, since no other nation could have resisted the Saracen hosts if once they had become masters over France.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW RODOMONT AND MANDRICARD FOUGHT TOGETHER, BUT DORALIS PERSUADED THEM TO A TRUCE.

DRIPPING with water and splashed with mud from head to foot, but unwounded and scarcely at all fatigued by his hard day's fighting, the terrible King Rodomont scrambled up the bank of the river Seine and stood in the flowery meadow that bordered its stream. Wrathful was his countenance, as though he were ill schooled to brook defeat; his brows were knit to a fearful scowl, and his eyes glared with hatred, as he shook his fist towards the walls of Paris, and muttered: "They shall pay me richly yet for this day's business." But suddenly, as he stood to take breath and look about him, he caught sight of a queer-looking little dwarf, who was strolling disconsolately along the path. The mannikin, who was barely three feet high, was clad in a costly dress of scarlet and white, such as might befit a wealthy courtier; but on his head he wore the cap and bells of a jester, while his tiny hand grasped a little ivory staff that looked like a miniature copy of a minister's wand of office. At the sight of him Rodomont's face lighted up with joy, not from amusement at the little fellow's comical appearance, but because he knew him to be the favourite dwarf of the lovely Princess Doralis, his lady and affianced bride. So he stepped forward to meet him and hailed him cheerily, crying: "What news, my mannikin, what news of our lady, and on what errand has she sent you hither?" But the dwarf answered gloomily: "Speak not of thy lady or of mine any more, for she that was

our lady is become the slave of another. A few days since we encountered a knight by the way, who took the Princess Doralis out of our keeping and carried her off by force in his company." And thereupon the dwarf related all the story of Mandricard's victory over the escort of the Princess, and how he had half compelled and half persuaded her to accompany him. At every word the wrath of Rodomont grew fiercer, and his savage face darkened with frowns, till at last he could control himself no longer, but burst into wild cries of anger and jealousy, vowing that he would not rest till he had taken vengeance on the knight who had dared to rob him of his lady. Even as the bereaved tigress burns with impetuous rage when she returns to her empty lair and, after roaming through all the thicket, understands at length that her cubs have been stolen from her; as she takes no heed of mountain or river, and neither darkness nor tempest nor the length of the way can check the hatred with which she dogs the steps of the hunter; even so the furious Rodomont blazed out in ungovernable passion, as, shouting to the dwarf: "Begone! begone!" he dashed away through the meadow, thinking only how he might avenge himself on Prince Mandricard.

He stayed not for horse or chariot, nor yet to inform his comrades of his purpose, but hurried forward along the road which he deemed the most likely to bring him to the Prince, counting on supplying his want of a charger by laying hands on the first good horse he should happen to see. He cared nothing about robbing another man to suit his own convenience, and in his present mood rather hoped that he might have a struggle for what he wanted, so that he might wreak a portion of his furious wrath upon somebody. In this he was disappointed; for after travelling several days on foot, he fell in at length with a solitary maiden, who was mounted on a handsome palfrey and led a magnificent charger by the bridle. And now suppose we go back for a moment in our story and see who this maiden was and to whom the horse which she was leading belonged.

When Prince Roger was carried off upon the Hippogrif, of course he left his charger behind; and next after his

separation from Bradamante, this was what most annoyed him about the adventure, since his steed was such an one as a gallant knight prizes above everything upon earth save the lady of his love alone. His name was Frontin, and he was the best charger to be found in all the Saracen army. In battle or tournament he knew his duties as thoroughly as the most experienced knight; no danger ever startled him, and no quantity of work seemed able to subdue his mettle; in a word, he had no equal in the world, excepting only the celebrated three of whom you have heard so much already—I mean, of course, Sir Raynald's Bayard, Duke Astulf's Rabican, and Count Roland's famous Gold Bridle. No wonder that Roger was vexed at being separated from such a horse as this Frontin. But Bradamante, eager to care for anything that belonged to her lover, took the gallant charger with her, and presently sent him under sure guard to her own home in Montalbano, with a message ordering that he should be well tended there till she should either send for him again or come herself to fetch him. There Frontin remained in good keeping till Bradamante returned to her home after slaying the false Count Pinabel, and being parted once more from her Prince. You remember, I hope, how she was constrained to abide in Montalbano for a time, so that she was unable to seek Roger, as she had intended, at Vallombrosa. Finding that she could not carry out her purpose in this matter, the noble damsel thought that at least she would give her lover the pleasure of having his gallant steed again; so she called for her faithful waiting-woman Hippalca, who was the daughter of her nurse and had known and loved her from a child, and charged her to set out on her palfrey leading Frontin by the bridle at her side, and journey in search of Prince Roger, to whom she was also to explain the reasons which kept Bradamante for the present at Montalbano.

Hippalca willingly set out to do this errand for her mistress; but before she could find Prince Roger she had the misfortune to fall in with the terrible King Rodomont. They met in a narrow path at the foot of a hill, so that the Saracen was easily able to bar the way against her; but

even he hardly liked to rob a defenceless maiden, though he had vowed to take for himself the first good horse he could meet with. Now, as he eyed the gallant Frontin, he perceived that he had met with a better than he could have ventured to hope for; and more than once he exclaimed: "By the beard of the Prophet, but I would that the horse's master were here!" "Would indeed that he were!" answered Hippalca sharply, for she was annoyed at the tone of the Saracen and at the unwelcome interruption of her journey; "would indeed that he were! for methinks he would soon teach you to mind your business and to know how much he is your better." "And, pray, who may be this wonderful knight who claims to be my better?" asked the angry Rodomont. "The courteous Prince Roger, Sir Knight," said Hippalca; "and now, perhaps, you will let me go upon my way." But Rodomont caught Frontin's bridle out of her hand, exclaiming: "Oho! then I do you no wrong, fair maiden, in taking this horse for myself. From Roger I take him, and to Roger I will answer for what I do; go and tell him that Rodomont, King of Algiers, has gained possession of his charger, and will maintain his claim against him in battle whenever and wherever he pleases. Truly I am not hard to find, if he cares to seek me out, seeing that wherever I go the fame of my deeds proclaims my presence." With these words the Saracen leaped upon Frontin's back and rode away, leaving the disconsolate maiden to bear the evil tidings to Prince Roger.

He rode away over the hill, paying no heed to the tears of the maiden, or to the threats and reproaches which she shouted after him, but blessing the good luck which had brought him so splendid a charger at his need. No whit did he care though he had broken all laws of chivalrous courtesy, which he was never much inclined to respect, and now regarded less than ever, being intent solely on prosecuting his quarrel with Prince Mandricard. Yet, eager though he was to do battle with the Tartar champion, he had to travel for several days more before he could find any trace of him; but at last he passed through the

shepherd's valley, where Mandricard had just dealt the loyal Prince Zerbin his death-wound. Riding farther along the place, he soon came in sight of the ferocious young Tartar himself, with the lovely Doralis still in his company; and as soon as he beheld them he uttered a cry of eager revenge, and dashed forward to challenge his rival to battle. Doralis was the first to espy him, while yet he was a great way off, and pointed him out to her companion, saying: "Lo! there comes the terrible King Rodomont, and you must prepare yourself for a mortal struggle. For I doubt not that he is come with intent to take vengeance for the wrong which you have done him." "I am ready," answered Mandricard, as he buckled tight the arms of Hector which Count Roland had so lately worn; "but hold you Gold Bridle's rein, and I will ride my own charger to meet the Algerian." So the Princess Doralis held Gold Bridle apart, while Prince Mandricard turned himself about to face the terrible King Rodomont.

As soon as they came within hearing of one another the enraged King burst forth in clamorous threats against the Tartar, menacing him with gestures of head and hand, and crying: "Robber and villain, bitterly shall you rue your folly! Death and disgrace shall be your portion; and too late you shall repent that ever you provoked my wrath to gratify a foolish whim. For revenge am I come, and a terrible revenge will I take!" But Mandricard answered: "Think not to terrify me by empty threats. Raw boys, weak women, and cowards that know no practice of arms, may be frightened thus; not I, to whom the toil of battle is ever more welcome than repose. Never does fighting come amiss to me; but gladly will I prove my might on horseback or on foot, naked or equipped, in open field or within the enclosure of the lists." Thence the two rivals proceeded to mutual insults, to cries of rage, and finally to blows with the sword; even as the wind first soughs gently among the pines, then dashes their branches together with greater and greater fury, till at last it bursts in tempest, tearing up the trees of the forest by the roots, and laying level with the ground the habitations of men.

Thus did these two ardent warriors meet in deadly strife; the earth trembled at the terrible clash of their weapons, and the bright sparks struck from their armour flew upwards to the sky like lamps lit and quenched by thousands at a time. Without a thought of repose, without resting for a single instant to take breath, they continued their battle, striving each to cleave his adversary's harness of mail and lay bare his flesh to the blow. Yet neither the one nor the other could gain an inch of vantage, but both stood firm on their ground, as though a wall of iron hedged them in. Once, among a thousand blows, the Tartar raised his sword in both hands and smote the King of Algiers full upon the brow, making countless lights dance before his dazzled eyes; the African's head fell backward over his charger's flanks, as though all his strength were spent: he lost his stirrup, and was like to fall from the saddle before the very eyes of his lady. But like a well-fashioned bow of tempered steel, which rebounds with greater force the more it is compressed and bent, so Rodomont sprang up again in a moment, and smote his enemy with redoubled fury. Just such a blow as he had himself received he now dealt the Tartar Prince, whose good helmet stayed it from cleaving through his skull, but could not prevent it so stunning him that for a moment he lost all knowledge of his whereabouts. Rodomont hastened to press his advantage, and lifted his blade for a second blow; but the Tartar's charger, shrinking from the whistling steel, swerved backward as the sword descended, and saved his master at the cost of his own life. For the blow, which was aimed at the rider, fell full upon the head of his horse; and, as the poor beast wore no helmet of steel to defend him, his skull was cloven to the brain, and he fell dead without a struggle upon the ground. Mandricard by this time had recovered his senses, and leaped instantly to his feet, whirling Durindana round his head; whereat the African King spurred his horse forward against him, thinking to knock him down and trample him under foot. But the Tartar stood firm as a rock which no wave can shake from its position; and so it happened that Rodomont's horse

was overthrown by the shock, while Mandricard remained upright as before. Rodomont immediately leaped clear of his fallen steed, and the rivals, now both dismounted, fell to renewing their battle on equal terms and with greater fury than ever. And how the matter would have ended no one can tell; for at this juncture a messenger came up with tidings that put an end to their strife for the present.

This messenger was a Tunisian courier, sent by King Agramant to seek out the absent leaders of his army and summon them to return instantly to the camp, where the Saracens were now besieged by the victorious Charlemagne and brought in sore peril of their lives. The courier had already found Prince Roger, as I told you in the chapter about Richardetto; and now he recognised King Rodomont and Prince Mandricard not so much by the devices on their shields as by the terrible blows which he saw them deal. He ventured not, however, to approach them, thinking that the maxim, "An ambassador is held harmless in all things," would be small consolation if once a stroke from either of their swords were to light upon him. But he turned to the Princess Doralis, who was sitting a little distance apart upon her palfrey with Gold Bridle's rein in her hand, and besought her to put an end to this ill-timed battle. To this end he told her of the peril in which King Agramant and King Marsilius, together with her own father and all the Saracen army, were placed, and how they needed the help of all their bravest champions to deliver them from utter destruction. When Doralis heard this her heart was stirred within her, and bidding the courier hold the horses, she dismounted from her palfrey and stepped boldly in between the combatants, raising her hand with a gesture of command, and crying to them in a resolute tone: "By the love which you both profess to bear me, I charge you cease instantly from your combat."

Now when these fierce knights beheld how the lady whom they loved, and whose hand was to be the prize of their contest, came forward to put them asunder, they lowered the points of their swords at once, and stood quietly listening to what she might say to them; for they

DORALIS STAYS THE FIGHT.—P. 208.

were persuaded that so nobly nurtured a Princess would never interfere in such a combat without good and sufficient cause. Then Doralis, rejoicing to perceive that they were submissive to her authority, informed them of everything which King Agramant's courier had narrated to her; and she ended her story by saying: "Hearken now both of you to me, and approve yourselves worthy of my love by your obedience to the commands which I shall lay upon you. For I hereby make a vow, which I will keep even at the risk of my life, that if either of you refuses to do my bidding in this matter, he shall forfeit all hope of calling me his wife for ever. This is no time for private quarrels, when our Kings with their armies are in peril, and our cause is like to be ruined unless every man does his utmost to save it. Wherefore there shall be truce between you two for a time; you, Prince Mandricard, shall not provoke King Rodomont any more; and you, Sir King, shall cease from urging your claim to possess me for a while. Both of you shall travel immediately in my company to the Saracen camp; and forgetting the hatred that is between you, you shall do your duty as good and loyal comrades, till such time as Charlemagne shall be driven back within the walls of Paris, and our army shall be delivered from the fear of its enemies. Then, if you will, you may fix time and place for renewing this battle, and you may fight it in due order within the lists, as befits so weighty an issue, before the eyes of King Agramant and my father."

Both the knights applauded the counsel of their Princess, and agreed to make truce, as she commanded them, for a time; but none the less they hated each other mortally in their hearts, and determined to renew the combat as soon as ever the great Emperor should be driven back from besieging the camp. Meanwhile they put up their swords, and prepared to take the way to Paris, Rodomont riding upon Frontin, who was none the worse for his tumble, while Prince Mandricard mounted on Gold Bridle, in place of the Tartar charger which the King had accidentally slain.

CHAPTER V.

HOW RODOMONT AND MANDRICARD FELL IN WITH MARFISA AND ROGER; AND HOW THEY ALL WENT TOGETHER TO HELP KING AGRAMANT.

Now we are going to meet a few of our old friends again, and I hope you care enough about them to wish to hear a little more of their history. You remember, no doubt, how Richardetto, after his deliverance from the stake, brought his preserver Roger and the lovely Princess Mayblossom his bride to the castle of his cousin Sir Aldigier. This noble knight welcomed them all courteously, and thanked Prince Roger warmly in the name of his whole family for saving his young cousin's life; nevertheless he seemed troubled and ill at ease, and turning to Richardetto, he said: "My cousin, I would that I could show my gratitude for your deliverance by a merry countenance; but alas! while you are saved others of our house are fallen into fearful peril. Only this morning a messenger brought me the tidings, saying that my brothers Sir Malibran and Sir Vivian have been treacherously taken prisoners by Count Bertram of Maganza and his vassals, and that to-morrow they will be led to his castle, where they are to suffer a shameful death. Immediately I sent off a messenger to inform our noble Raynald of their peril; but I greatly fear that he cannot possibly arrive in time, and I know not how else to provide for their rescue, seeing that I have but a handful of men-at-arms in this fortress, while our enemies are many in number." At this sad news Richardetto's face grew very sorrowful; but Prince Roger turned to Sir Aldigier, and asked: "Know

you the road, Sir Knight, by which these villains will lead your brothers to their death?" "Too well I know it," answered the Knight, "for it leads through the territories of our cruel enemies; and many a time have the houses of Clairmont and Maganza met in battle upon it; but now I perceive not how to turn my knowledge to account." Then said Roger: "I have always heard that the men of Maganza are a false and treacherous brood, and more than any man alive do I wish prosperity to your noble house of Clairmont. Wherefore place me, I beseech you, at any point by which the prisoners have to pass, and it shall go hard but I will accomplish their rescue." "Truly," answered Sir Aldigier, "our house owes you already a heavy debt of gratitude, which will be trebled if you give us this succour. But think not that we will leave you to face our enemies alone, which would be a foul dishonour to our name; nay, but Richardetto and I will essay the adventure in your company, and will be for ever grateful to you for this timely offer of your help." This matter settled, they all went in to supper; and after supper Sir Aldigier escorted Prince Roger to his chamber, where he left him to take his rest for the night.

But in spite of his late toilsome journeys sleep came not to the eyes of Prince Roger, because his soul was vexed with anxious thoughts. The tidings of King Agramant's peril, which he had received the day before from the courier, troubled him greatly; and he was eager to hasten to the help of his lord, counting each moment's delay as a stain upon the honour which he guarded so jealously. On the other hand, it grieved him that he could not yet perform his promise to Bradamante by going to Vallombrosa and adopting the Christian faith. But his allegiance was still due to the Saracen King, whom he could not abandon in the hour of his greatest need. For he feared lest his change of parties should be imputed to him for cowardice, and lest men should say: "Prince Roger faithfully followed Agramant through the days of prosperity, but fell away from him in the time of his distress." Wherefore he resolved to do his duty at all hazards; but he thought: "At least I will

write a letter to my lady and explain to her the strait in which I am placed, that she may not account me as one who lightly regards the promises he has made her. For my lady is noble of heart above all women, so that she will understand the necessity which is laid upon me; yea, I know that if she were here to counsel me she would be the first to bid me perform my duty to my King." So he called for paper and ink, and wrote a letter to Bradamante setting forth all the circumstances of the case; then he folded the paper and sealed it, and thrust it into the pocket of his vest, to keep it safely till he should find some trusty messenger to take it. Thereat his heart was lightened, so that he lay down upon his bed and slept soundly till the following morning.

He was awoken betimes by Sir Aldigier and Richardetto, who came to summon him to the rescue of their kinsmen. Willingly would our gallant Roger have undertaken this enterprise alone, knowing that he was a match for any number of the treacherous Maganzese; but the others were determined to accompany him, claiming to bear their part in a matter which concerned them so nearly. So the three rode together from Aldigier's castle, till they came within the enemy's territory. This was a broad stretch of plain lying open to the scorching sun; no forest or grove was anywhere to be seen, but only the bare desolate soil, overgrown here and there by a patch of scanty brushwood, and never broken to the use of man by mattock or ploughshare. Our three knights took up their position on a path which traversed this dreary plain; and as they waited there they were approached by a cavalier of lordly mien, whose armour was fringed with gold, and who bore on his shield the device of a flame-coloured phœnix rising with outspread wings from a field of green. The stranger laid his lance in rest and challenged them to a trial of arms; but Sir Aldigier answered: "Sir Knight, at any other time I will gladly accept your challenge, and I doubt not that my comrades will be as ready as myself. But just now we are engaged in a matter of importance, being intent on rescuing certain of our kinsfolk who have been treacherously captured by

our enemies, and who will shortly be brought hither to die under guard of a numerous company. Wherefore, I pray you, wait till we have finished this business, after which you shall have ample satisfaction." "By my faith," replied the stranger, "I only challenged you for want of something better to do. But if you have fighting ready to hand, I will e'en strike in upon your side; for by what you tell me I judge you to be fewer in number than your opponents. And think not that I shall do you little service; but look upon my device, and know that I am the Princess Marfisa."

It was indeed the great Princess Marfisa herself, who was newly arrived in the land of France in company with Sansonet and Sir Guy the Wild and the two brave sons of Oliver. As soon as they were all on shore she had bidden adieu to her companions, saying: "I hate the practice of your knights who travel like the swallows in flocks, as if two arms were not enough to defend one head." So she had set out alone upon her journey, being desirous above all things to match herself against the most famous of the Paladins. As yet she had encountered none of them; but she was always ready for a battle, and now joyfully engaged herself to fight against the traitors of Maganza.

Sir Aldigier had barely time to thank her for her promise of help before the false Count Bertram came in sight, followed by a company of more than a hundred men-at-arms. In the midst of them walked the two noble prisoners and a couple of pages, who had been captured together with their masters; all four were bareheaded and stripped to their shirts, with their hands tied behind their backs and ropes hung round their necks. At the sight of this foul indignity, practised upon knights of noble birth and helpless boys, the blood of our champions boiled in their veins; and shouting, "Clairmont! Clairmont to the rescue!" they dashed into the throng of their enemies. Roger first aimed his lance against Count Bertram, whom he laid dead with a broken neck upon the ground; then he pierced two soldiers through the breast before his weapon snapped asunder, after

which he drew forth Balisarda from the scabbard and laid an enemy low at every stroke. Meanwhile Marfisa had slain the lieutenant of the band and two others with her lance, and was now busy rivalling the feats of Roger with the sword, while Aldigier and Richardetto dashed straight through the bewildered throng and cut the cords which bound their kinsmen's hands, bidding them array themselves in the dead knights' armour and help in taking vengeance on their foes. Very soon the whole band of traitors were slain or dispersed in flight; Sir Malibran and Sir Vivian with their pages were rescued; and much spoil fell into the hands of the conquerors, for the men of Maganza had brought with them a string of mules laden with treasure and costly stuffs, besides large provision of wine and victuals.

Well satisfied with their morning's work, our friends rode away from the desolate plain, till they came to a shady grove with a beautiful fountain in the midst of it. Here they dismounted to refresh themselves after their labours; and when they had eaten and drunk, Sir Malibran and Sir Vivian kept watch, while the others lay down to sleep. Soon Sir Vivian awakened them with the tidings that a maiden was approaching, who made as if she wished to speak with them; and this maiden proved to be no other than Bradamante's handmaid Hippalca, who was journeying in search of Prince Roger. First she gave Richardetto tidings of his noble sister; and then, taking the Courteous Prince apart from the others, she told him how Rodomont had taken his good horse Frontin out of her keeping, and had vowed to maintain possession of him against his rightful master. Moreover, she gave him the message with which Bradamante had charged her; and Roger in turn entrusted her with his letter, which she promised to deliver to her mistress. Her errand done she went upon her way, and soon came back safely to Montalbano, while Roger rode a little way along a woodland path, hoping to come upon some trace of King Rodomont.

While Roger was thus absent from the party Marfisa yielded to the urgent request of her friends, and consented

to lay aside for once her armour of mail and array herself in woman's apparel. And when they beheld her thus attired the knights of Clairmont were astounded at her wonderful beauty, marvelling that so fair a dame should prove herself the equal of any knight in warfare. Scarcely had they recovered from their amazement when they were disturbed again by the appearance of two valiant-looking knights with a fair lady riding between them. These were King Rodomont and Prince Mandricard, who were journeying with the Princess Doralis towards Paris after that she had persuaded them to make truce for a time. Now when Mandricard perceived Marfisa by the fountain in company with the knights of Clairmont he determined to win her from them in battle, thinking that he might give her in marriage to King Rodomont, and thus persuade the Algerian to renounce his claim upon Princess Doralis. So he laid his lance in the rest and challenged the knights to combat, whereupon Sir Vivian galloped boldly forward and aimed his lance against the Tartar's visor. But though his aim was true and steady, he could not prevail against the mighty Mandricard, who shivered his shield in pieces and laid him sprawling at full length upon the ground. Malibran and Aldigier met with no better success; and last of the band came Richardetto, who proved himself worthy to be a Paladin of France by the gallantry and vigour of his onset. Nevertheless he too went down before the lance of the Tartar; but he was only vanquished through the fault of his horse, which stumbled and fell, while Gold Bridle remained firm as a rock beneath the weight of Mandricard.

Seeing that no knight remained to oppose him, the Tartar turned to Marfisa, saying: "Fair lady, you are ours by right of conquest, since all your champions have been unhorsed and defeated." But Marfisa laughed scornfully as she answered: "Sir Knight, you have won no right to my company, seeing that none of these cavaliers is my chosen knight. But I too have some knowledge of arms, so that I need no stranger to champion my cause; but he that would possess me for his own must first win me from

my own self in battle." With these words she pulled off her gown and clad herself in her armour again; and as soon as she was equipped, she laid her lance in the rest and defied the Saracen to battle. At their first encounter both lances were shivered to the handles, while neither Mandricard nor the Princess gave backward so much as an inch upon their saddles. Thereupon they snatched forth their swords and set to hewing at each other's armour; and I know not who would have had the advantage in the end if their battle had been suffered to continue. But it was suddenly stopped by Rodomont, who thrust himself between them and cried: "Sir Prince, if you are minded to fight, I have the first claim on your attention. But be pleased to remember our compact, and engage in no private quarrel till we have delivered King Agramant out of danger." Then he justified his conduct to the Princess by giving her a full account of what had happened, entreating her to postpone the settlement of this quarrel for a time. But when Marfisa understood the matter, she exclaimed: "Here is just the opportunity which I am seeking! Suffer me, valiant sirs, to go in your company to the Saracen camp, where I may fight against some of these famous Paladins; for to that end am I come to France." Rodomont, of course, was delighted at her proposal; so she took speedy leave of Richardetto and his vanquished cousins, and turned to ride with Doralis and her lovers to Paris.

But just as they were starting Prince Roger returned to the fountain, and a new contention arose. From afar off he recognised his charger Frontin with Rodomont seated on his back; whereupon he galloped forward, burning with anger and shouting: "Sir King, dismount, I charge you, from my horse, or else maintain by arms your right to ride him." Never in all his life had the terrible Rodomont refused a challenge to battle; and, moreover, he was especially eager to fight Prince Roger since he had heard of his great renown, and deemed that nowhere could he find a worthier foe. Yet so great was his anxiety to lose no time in succouring King Agramant, and so firm his resolution to abide by his compact with Prince Mandricard,

that he curbed his warlike spirit and answered: "Sir Prince, at any other time I would gladly encounter you, and I hope that we may settle this dispute ere many days are past; but now both you and I owe our swords to our liege lord the King of Tunis, seeing that he is greatly straitened by his enemies, and hourly expects our help." To this Roger made answer that he was very willing to defer the fight till after Charlemagne should be driven back from the camp; "but in the meantime," he said, "I am Frontin's rightful master, and you must deliver him into my keeping till such time as we can contend for the possession of him." This was surely a just and temperate demand; yet King Rodomont refused to agree to it, and the contention was waxing hot between them when it was unexpectedly cut short by a new freak on the part of Mandricard.

The ferocious young Tartar suddenly provoked Prince Roger to combat, crying: "The device upon your shield belongs to me alone, and I will never suffer any other knight to bear it." Now Roger bore upon his shield the device of a white eagle displayed upon an azure field, which in olden days was the emblem of the city of Troy, and which had descended to the Courteous Prince as the lineal heir of Hector. But Mandricard also claimed it for his own, and some two or three years ago he and Roger had had a battle upon the subject. Now the Tartar pressed his claim again, and summoned Roger to abandon his crest or fight without delay for the right to bear it. Never would our hero consent to forego that glorious device; the mere suggestion lashed his soul to fury, and "What!" he cried, "think you to make good this claim against me now because I am already engaged in a dispute with Rodomont? Nay, but if need be, I will show myself man enough to take both Frontin from him and the crest of Hector from you! Once already have I striven against you on this account; but then I forbore to slay you because you wore no sword. Now I will prove against you to your hurt that the white eagle is mine by right and that you usurp my device in bearing it." "By my life," answered Mandricard, "'tis you that usurp my crest;" and therewithal he plucked forth

Durindana from the scabbard to maintain his fancied claim. The noble Roger, ever true to his reputation for courtesy, threw away his lance when he saw his antagonist draw the sword, and grasped Balisarda to contend against him on equal terms. A moment more and they would have met in deadly combat; but Rodomont and Marfisa threw themselves between them and forced them asunder, beseeching them to stay their hands from the battle. Rodomont especially was angered against Prince Mandricard, who had now violated their compact the second time, and again he exclaimed: "If you must needs be doing battle with somebody, our quarrel stands first for settlement. How often must I put you in mind of our agreement to suffer no private brawlings till we have rescued our allies from their danger? Care you nothing for the honour of our leader or for the success of the Saracen cause? When our army is delivered you and I will fight out our unfinished battle; next comes my contention against Prince Roger for the possession of Frontin; and after these disputes have been decided you can fight him about this matter of crests if you find yourself still alive upon the earth. But flatter not yourself that it will ever come to this, for I look to give you such handling as will put an end to your claims and quarrels once for all." This speech angered the ferocious Mandricard yet more, so that he wanted to fight with Roger and Rodomont both at once; and Roger, unused to brook insult from any man, no longer desired an agreement, but clamoured for instant combat. From all sides burst forth angry words accompanied by menacing gestures; while Marfisa addressed herself now to one and now to another of the knights, seeking to calm their wrath and heal their disputes, but meeting with little success in her unaccustomed office of peacemaker.

At last she too lost patience and exclaimed: "If you are all so bent on fighting, I will finish my little difference with Prince Mandricard. But if we are to succour King Agramant, let us succour him at once, and lose no time over quarrelling among ourselves." "I make no objection," said Roger, "provided that my horse be first restored to

me; but I am resolved either to die here or to return on his back to the camp." "You will find it easier to die than to recover him," shouted Rodomont in a furious passion; to which Prince Roger returned no answer in words, but grasped Balisarda in his hand and rushed upon him with such violence that the Algerian lost his stirrup and with difficulty maintained his seat. Thereupon Mandricard cried: "Defer the battle, Roger, or fight with me," and ungenerously struck the Prince, whose attention was fully occupied with Rodomont, an unexpected blow upon the head. Roger bent down beneath the stroke till the plume upon his casque mingled with his charger's mane; nor was he able to raise himself up again, because Rodomont dealt him a second blow of equal force without considering what a shameful thing it was for two knights to combine against a single adversary. At this second blow Prince Roger lost consciousness for a moment; the grasp of his hands was loosened, so that the bridle and sword fell from them, and his charger sprang forward unchecked, while Balisarda was left lying upon the ground.

Thereat Marfisa waxed very wroth, accounting it foul villainy that two should fight against one; moreover, she considered Roger as her comrade in arms since they had joined together in defeating the traitors of Maganza. So she rushed to encounter Prince Mandricard, while Rodomont pursued after Roger, thinking that another such a stroke would win him Frontin once for all, and shaming not to press his unfair advantage against the Prince, who had been so villainously deprived of his sword.

But the knights of Clairmont had been watching the progress of the struggle, and were resolved to hinder such dastardly injustice to their benefactor. So Richardetto threw himself across Rodomont's path and checked him for a moment in his pursuit, while Vivian picked up Balisarda and replaced it in the hand of Roger, who was now recovered from his bewilderment. As soon as he felt the hilt in his hand again he dashed against the Algerian like the lion which has once been tossed upon the horns of the buffalo but recks not of wounds or pain in his eagerness to

take vengeance upon his enemy. Even thus did our Courteous Prince rush to avenge himself on King Rodomont, whom he smote with all his strength upon the visor, so that the Algerian fell backward over Frontin's flanks and would have dropped his sword in his turn if it had not been fastened by a strap to his wrist.

Meanwhile Marfisa was hard pressed by Prince Mandricard; for in making a sudden turn her charger slipped and fell upon his side. Before she could get him fairly on his feet again the discourteous Tartar spurred Gold Bridle forward and knocked him down the second time; but Roger beheld the valiant damsel's peril and hurried to the rescue, shouting: "Fight not against the fallen, Sir Prince, but turn and encounter me." With these words he smote the Tartar on the crest of his helmet, and gave Marfisa time to raise up her horse.

Rodomont at this moment found Roger gone from before him; but looking round he espied the gallant young Richardetto and remembered how he had brought timely succour to his antagonist. Vowing revenge, he galloped straight towards him, and this day might have ended the brave boy's life but for the sudden interference of Sir Malibran. That prudent cavalier possessed great skill in magic arts, and now turned his knowledge to account to save his kinsman's life. Hastily muttering a spell, he conjured up a spirit to do his bidding, and made him enter into the palfrey which the beautiful Princess Doralis rode. Seized with the demon, the quiet palfrey gave a sudden bound into the air, which wrung a scream from the lips of his rider, and then carried her away at full speed along the road which led towards Paris. Rodomont, when he heard his lady's scream, forgot all about the quarrel in which he was engaged and dashed off upon Frontin in pursuit of her; and Mandricard seeing these two gallop away from the field, turned Gold Bridle's head in the same direction and followed after them as hard as he could tear. Marfisa and Roger, too, seeing that their adversaries were gone, were loth to be left behind; and though their horses could not hope to overtake Frontin and Gold Bridle, they followed

as best they might along the road, and rapidly approached the Saracen encampment.

In this manner did King Agramant recover the services of his bravest champions, not by their own intention, but because of the demon which Sir Malibran had conjured into the palfrey of the Princess Doralis.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE SARACEN CHIEFS WERE ALL AT LOGGERHEADS, AND HOW ROGER KILLED THE FEROCIOUS MANDRICARD.

VERY clever appeared Sir Malibran's contrivance for saving Richardetto's life, yet it turned out ill for the Emperor Charlemagne and his army. With a little more time for consideration Malibran would have ordered his spirit to drive the palfrey far away towards the East; but he was in such a hurry to prevent the danger which threatened his kinsman, that he simply bade the demon carry off the Princess Doralis at full speed, leaving him free to take her in whatever direction he pleased. And the malicious spirit chose the road to Paris, by which he brought the fair Princess and her pair of lovers to the Saracen encampment much quicker than they would have gone if left to themselves.

The Pagans were still cooped within their lines and encompassed about by a ring of enemies; but, as ill luck would have it, many of the foremost warriors were just now absent from the Christian ranks. Raynald, for one, had gone southward on receiving Sir Aldigier's message; Prince Zerbin of Scotland was dead; the Duke of Lancaster had returned to England, since the realm could not long spare both King and Regent; and others of the Paladins and leaders were dispersed abroad, some from one cause and some from another, so that Charlemagne's army, though still strong in position, was grown very weak in knights of approved renown. On the other hand, Gradasso, King of China, and Sacripant, King of Circassia, had lately returned

together to the camp of the Saracens, who were now to receive a still more valuable reinforcement.

For Rodomont and Mandricard, racing neck and neck with the Princess's palfrey, but unable quite to catch him, came within sight of the hostile armies, and instantly resolved to cut their way through to the Saracen lines in spite of all that Charlemagne might do to oppose them. So they came storming down upon the Christian quarters, shouting the war-cry of "Africa and Spain!" and slaughtering every Christian who was unlucky enough to come within their reach. "To arms! to arms!" resounded over the plain; but the Pagan champions were in the midst of our men before they could buckle on their mail or make ready their weapons for battle. The Christian rear-guard fled in confusion almost without striking a blow, and the whole army was thrown into a hurly-burly before they had time to know what was befalling them. Presently they began forming themselves in squadrons and companies, while the great Emperor hurried forth, surrounded by his Paladins, to inquire the reason of the uproar. But by this time the two Saracens and their lady had traversed the whole breadth of the camp, and Charlemagne could only descry the fatal marks of their passage. These were only too plain to view; for the line by which they had passed was strewn with corpses, whose fearful wounds bore witness that they had been assailed by no common foe.

Order was not yet restored when Roger and Marfisa appeared and straightway rivalled the feats of their predecessors. As when a mine is sprung beneath the walls of a beleaguered fortress, and first the line of black powder flashes up in flame and smoke, then with an awful crash the solid masonry is blown and scattered into the air, even so did this gallant pair dash forward to the fray and deal ruin and destruction around them. Many of those who had escaped the fury of Rodomont and Mandricard, and were congratulating themselves on their lucky fleetness of foot, now fell beneath the swords of these others; and so they too rode safely through the Christian lines, and arrived within the entrenchments of King Agramant.

As soon as they were there, the Saracens were no longer oppressed by fear of the Paladins; and it was resolved to take advantage of the confusion among the French by sallying forth instantly to attack them. Fired by the reckless daring of his leaders, each Pagan felt himself a match for a hundred adversaries as King Agramant gave the signal to advance; and to the sound of drums and trumpets, with waving of pennon and banner and knightly plumes, the whole army rushed forth beyond their lines. With incredible fury they attacked the Christians at every point; and these latter were taken unawares, not having yet recovered from their astonishment at the onslaught of Roger and Marfisa. Nevertheless their captains essayed to marshal them for battle, and made brave resistance for a while to the surging torrent of their foes. Presently, however, they began to feel the want of their most notable champions; for there was scarce a chieftain in their ranks able to cope with the force of the terrible Rodomont, the furious rage of Mandricard, or the gallantry of Roger and Marfisa. Gradasso, too, and Sacripant showed themselves hardly inferior to the other four; so that, while the common soldiers on either side were fairly matched, the greater force of the Saracen captains turned the tide of battle in their favour. Ogier the Dane was severely wounded in the head, and Oliver in the shoulder, and some of the lesser Paladins were actually taken prisoners by their enemies. Brandimart alone still maintained the unequal fight with marvellous valour; and if only his friend the peerless Count and Raynald had been present to help him, the Christians might well have hoped to gain the victory. But, unassisted as he was, the gallant Paladin could do no more than cover the retreat of his fellows, and enable the Emperor to bring the greater portion of them safe home within the walls of Paris. Even so vast numbers lay dead upon the field, while many were driven into the Seine and perished in its waters; and the result of this disastrous day was that the Christians were once more pent within the city, while the victorious Saracens took up their old positions to besiege them.

But now that King Agramant was delivered from his

peril, the old dissensions among the Pagan chieftains burst forth with double vigour. Rodomont insisted on finishing his interrupted battle with Prince Mandricard; Mandricard was impatient to fight with Roger for the right to bear the Trojan eagle; Roger pressed his claim to Frontin against King Rodomont; and Marfisa cried that it was high time for her to show Mandricard how a damsel could stand champion in her own behalf. Each knight demanded that his own particular quarrel should be the first decided; but at length they agreed to submit their claims to King Agramant, who should determine the order of their precedence. The whole four, therefore, appeared before the prudent King, and nearly deafened him by speaking all at once in their loudest tones, so that it was a long time before he could make his judgment known. At last he got a hearing, and commanded that the order of their several combats should be settled by lot,—a decision at which none of them could grumble, but which pleased them none the better on that account. However, they were bound to submit, since they could come to no agreement among themselves; so Agramant took four slips of paper, and wrote upon one of them "Rodomont and Mandricard," upon another "Mandricard and Roger," on the third "Roger and Rodomont," and on the fourth "Mandricard and Marfisa." Then he cast these lots into an urn and shook them well within it, after which he put in his hand and drew them forth at haphazard. The first to come out was the lot of Rodomont and Mandricard, wherefore the fight between them was appointed to take place on the morrow. The other lots followed in the order in which I just now mentioned them, which mightily displeased Marfisa, whose combat with Mandricard was thus fixed for last of all. But, annoyed though she was, she had pledged herself to abide by King Agramant's decision, so she had to swallow her vexation as best she could. Roger was hardly less discontented, though he had gained second and third places for his two disputes; for he thought: "Rodomont and Mandricard will never cease fighting till one or both of them be wounded to death, and whichever of them dies, I shall lose the chance of

establishing my right either to Frontin or to my crest." However, he too was bound in honour to accept the order as the lots had determined it.

Not far from Paris was a level field, enclosed by a wall about a mile in circumference, which had formerly been a fortress of great strength, but was now dismantled and fallen to decay. Here was marked off a space of ample size for the lists, with a wide gate at either end, according to custom, for entrance; and just within the gates were pitched the two pavilions for the champions. In the western pavilion stood the gigantic King of Algiers, and with him were the Spaniard Ferralu and Sacripant, King of Circassia, who aided him in putting on the famous armour of dragon's hide, while Prince Mandricard occupied the pavilion at the opposite end, and was armed by Prince Roger and Gradasso, King of China. Half-way down one side of the lists a high double throne was erected, on which the Kings Agramant and Marsilius took their seats, surrounded by the flower of the African and Spanish chivalry; and opposite them in the ladies' gallery, accompanied by dames of royal and noble blood, sat the beautiful Princess Doralis, whose hand was to be the victor's guerdon.

The people were gathered in their thousands round the lists, and everything was in readiness for the combat, when suddenly a fearful clamour arose in the eastern pavilion. The cause of it was a fresh dispute added to the four already existing, and threatening to rival the bitterest of them in fury. For as soon as Mandricard was equipped in all his armour, King Gradasso stretched forth his hand to take the sword, intending to gird it round the Tartar Prince's body. But he had no sooner got it in his grasp than he perceived it to be the famous Durindana, to which he also had long laid claim; only he could not imagine how it had come into Mandricard's possession. So he asked him whether he had gained it from Count Roland by force or compact, and where and when he had acquired it. "I fought a mighty battle for it with Roland," answered the Tartar, "from which we parted on equal terms. Afterwards, however, the Count feared to meet me again; where-

fore he feigned madness and threw away his sword and armour, hoping by such means to elude my vengeance." "Be Roland sane or mad," replied the stately King of China, "I claim this sword for my own wheresoever I find it, and never will I suffer another to wear it a moment longer than I can help. Provide yourself, therefore, with some other weapon, or else fight with me this instant for the possession of Durindana, since it is only fitting that you should win your weapons fairly before using them in your conflict with King Rodomont." "Never comes sound more welcome to my ears than the utterance of a challenge," answered the Tartar; "only bring Rodomont to consent, and our quarrel shall be decided without delay." But Prince Roger was very wroth at the idea of this arrangement, which would have deferred the settlement of his own disputes; and "Nay," he cried, "but the order of the lots must be kept: either Rodomont comes first to battle, or I, who am next in succession, take his place. For if Gradasso's reasoning be good, that arms must be won before they are borne, you must despoil me of the Trojan eagle before you can wear it as your crest. If you disturb the settled order in part, I will overturn it altogether, and bid you fight with me first of all for the device." "Neither sword nor crest will I surrender," shouted Mandricard in a furious rage; whereupon he clenched his fist and struck Gradasso such a blow upon the wrist as forced him to let go the hilt. Enraged at so gross an insult, the King plucked forth his scimitar, and called to Roger to stand clear from before him; but Roger too had drawn his sword and demanded the first place in this encounter, while Mandricard yelled defiance against the pair, daring them to assail him both at once. And a strange medley would have resulted from all this brawling, if King Agramant had not arrived upon the scene, seeking to know the reason of so unseemly an uproar. Out of respect to their liege lord the disputants stayed their hands from the strife, and explained the causes which had provoked it; and when Agramant understood the matter, he ordained that for this once Gradasso should courteously resign

Durindana to Prince Mandricard, till the Tartar had ended his contest against King Rodomont.

Scarcely was this difference settled when sounds of angry voices, soon followed by the clashing of steel, were heard proceeding from the opposite tent, where Sacripant and Sir Ferralu had already clothed the terrible Rodomont in his armour. But when they came to fetch him his horse, the King of Circassia was astonished to see Frontin standing saddled and bridled by the tent, and to learn that this was the charger which Rodomont meant to ride that day. Now Frontin had originally belonged to this Sacripant, but a year or two ago the notorious thief Brunello had stolen him away, and afterwards sold him for a great price to Prince Roger, who knew nothing of his former history. His rightful master had never set eyes upon him since, but now that he had found him again, he determined to keep possession of him at all hazards. So he turned to Rodomont and said, "Know, Sir King, that this is my horse, which was stolen from me many months ago. Considering that we are comrades in arms I am willing to lend you the use of him for to-day; but only on condition that you acknowledge my right and restore him to me when your contest is over. Otherwise think not to mount him till you have made good your claim in battle against me." To this Rodomont, as proud a warrior as ever donned armour, made reply: "Sacripant, any other than you who should dare to address me thus would soon find reason to wish that he had been born without a tongue. But out of respect to our late fellowship I will merely warn you to cease insisting on your pretensions till you have seen the issue of my combat with Prince Mandricard. For I hope to show such prowess as shall make you thankful to surrender your claim, rather than risk yourself in battle to maintain it." "What!" exclaimed the Circassian in great wrath; "is such insolence all the courtesy you can show me? Nay, but I tell you I will never resign this horse while my hand is still able to grasp a sword." From words and mutual threats they proceeded to blows, and maintained the contest fiercely for some minutes; for Sacripant, though only half armed,

managed his sword with such dexterity that he parried every blow which the Algerian could deliver. Just in the nick of time, however, King Agramant received tidings of the dispute, whereupon he prayed Marsilius to see that Mandricard and Gradasso observed the terms of their engagement, while he himself hastened to King Rodomont's pavilion. As soon as he arrived he bade Sacripant expound his title to possess the horse, and the Circassian obeyed by recounting at great length the cunning theft which Brunello had practised on him.

Now it chanced that Marfisa was standing at the right hand of Agramant, and when she heard King Sacripant's story she suddenly remembered that Brunello had robbed her of her sword on the very same day. Burning to avenge this felony, and espying the hideous little rogue among the crowd of spectators, she rode straight to the spot where he stood, and, catching him up by the scruff of his neck, she laid him across the pommel of her saddle, saying to King Agramant as she did so: "Sir King, I too have been wronged by this scoundrelly vassal of yours, and I claim to punish him as he deserves. Wherefore I will carry him away and hold him prisoner for three days, during which you may make intercession for his life, if you care to interfere with my design. But on the fourth day, unless you can show good cause to hinder me, I shall hang him on the nearest tree, that justice may get her due at last." Having thus spoken, the Princess rode away with the little monster, paying no heed to his screams and entreaties for pardon, and kept him in prison for three days, as she had promised; but when this time of grace was over, she took him to the foot of a tree and hung him by the neck from one of its branches, and there was an end of him.

Meanwhile King Agramant was weary of these endless quarrels, which threatened to deprive him of half his bravest warriors; so he racked his brains to devise some means of preventing the fight between King Rodomont and Prince Mandricard; and after much thought he hit upon a plan which seemed likely to content them both. He proposed that the Princess Doralis, who was the innocent

cause of their dissension, should be free to make her choice between them, under condition that whichever of them was rejected should loyally submit himself to her will, and suffer her to marry his fortunate rival without further contention. Both knights were well pleased with this proposal, for each of them thought himself sure of his lady's preference; but the bystanders all supposed that she would give her voice for Rodomont, who had worn her colours on his helmet these three years past, and the fame of whose valiant deeds had made her name glorious throughout the world. While they busied themselves with such surmises King Agramant led the rivals to the foot of the ladies' gallery, and encouraged Doralis to name the one whom she preferred for her husband; at which the fair Princess cast her eyes upon the ground, and blushing to the roots of her hair, declared that Prince Mandricard was the dearer to her heart, and therefore she would make choice of him as her lord. The whole assembly marvelled greatly at her decision, but by far the most astonished of them all was the terrible King of Algiers, who never thought to figure as a rejected suitor. Burning with indignation, he would fain have repeated his challenge to the Prince of Tartary, but Agramant interposed and forbade him, reminding him of the covenant which he had made. Then, deeming himself doubly slighted by his lady and his liege lord, the angry Rodomont would no longer abide in the camp, but turned his back on his comrades, and rode sullenly away to nurse his wrath in solitude.

Roger would have followed after him to recover Frontin but that he was detained by his engagement to fight Prince Mandricard. So much time, however, had been wasted over the various quarrels and their settlement that it was now too late in the day for the Princes to begin their contest, and Agramant commanded that it should take place on the following morning. Meanwhile he spent the evening in trying to effect some arrangement by which this battle too might be avoided, or at least postponed; and Princess Doralis joined her entreaties to his, being very loth that her knight should risk his life for a paltry crest the very day after she had accepted him for her husband.

But all their efforts were vain, because neither Prince would suffer the other to bear the Trojan eagle any longer. Mandricard was obstinate in demanding a battle, which his ferocious spirit loved, whatever the pretext; while Roger contended that he had been grossly insulted by the Tartar, and that such outrage could only be avenged by bloodshed.

So our Courteous Prince took up his quarters in the western pavilion, and as soon as morning broke the trumpets sounded for the combat. At this welcome music both knights made haste to don their armour and mount their horses, while the Kings took their seats upon the throne, and the populace gathered round the barriers. The trumpets sounded the second time, and the two knights closed their visors and moved to their places, one at either end of the lists; but at the third blast they laid their lances in rest and rushed forward to the encounter with such fury that it seemed as though the sky were falling and the solid earth yawning under foot. Both lances were shivered to the handle, and the fragments flew high into the air; whereupon the warriors plucked forth their swords, and for the first time Durindana met Balisarda in deadly conflict. Each Prince directed his first blow against his foeman's visor, but neither could smite through the double bars of tempered steel. Then stroke followed stroke as thick as hailstones that strip the forest of leaf and twig; and thus they continued together for nearly an hour, each parrying the cuts of his antagonist, or raining down blows without effect upon his armour. The first advantage fell to the side of Mandricard, who with one stroke clave Prince Roger's shield from top to bottom, and drove Durindana on through the cuirass, till he cut into the flesh beneath it. At the sight of this fearful wound the blood of all the by-standers curdled in their veins, and their hearts sank with fear for the fate of Roger; for, as you may suppose, the Courteous Prince was the general favourite; and if the people's wishes could have decided the struggle, the ferocious Mandricard would long since have lain stark upon the ground. Feeling himself wounded, Roger gathered all his strength and brought Balisarda down upon the crest of

Prince Mandricard's helmet; and if the weapon had not turned in his hand that blow would have made an end of the Tartar's life. As it was, his brain reeled and his eyes were darkened, while his fingers let go the rein, and Gold Bridle bore him thrice round the enclosure before he could recover his senses. As soon as he was himself again he spurred his charger against Prince Roger, and rising in his stirrups lifted up Durindana above his head as if to smite him through the helmet to the brain; but our hero was too quick for him, and pierced the joints of his harness under the right armpit before the blow had time to descend. A crimson stream of blood rushed out from the gash, weakening the force of Mandricard's downward blow; yet even so the gallant Roger bent beneath it, and would have received an ugly wound if his helmet had been forged of common metal. But he recovered himself in a trice, and dealt his adversary a second wound upon the hip, which so angered the Tartar that he cast away his shield from off his arm and grasped Durindana in both hands. "Ah!" cried Roger, "here is proof that you are unworthy to bear the eagle, since you throw it thus wantonly to the ground;" but even as he spake he felt the full force of Durindana descending like an avalanche on his visor. Luckily it glanced from his face and fell upon the high pommel of his saddle; and although this was well plated with steel, the keen blade cut through it as a knife cuts cheese, giving Roger a grievous wound upon the thigh, from which he afterwards took long to recover. By this time both warriors were red with blood, and the issue of their combat was still in doubt; but now the skill of Prince Roger decided the struggle in his favour. Taking fair advantage of Mandricard's folly in throwing away his shield, he made a thrust with Balisarda at his left side; and dividing the steel cuirass, the point pierced between the Tartar's ribs to his heart and dealt him a mortal wound. Yet even in death the ferocious Mandricard gave proof of his mighty prowess; for with a last effort he clave through Roger's helmet and gave him a fearful gash upon the head. At the same instant both champions fell from their horses, so that the people knew not which to account

the conqueror, but believed them both to be slain. Soon, however, Roger raised himself up, and was proclaimed victor to the great joy of King Agramant and all the people; indeed I never heard that any one much regretted Prince Mandricard's death except the unhappy Princess Doralis, who had counted on welcoming him as her bridegroom.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW RAYNALD BROUGHT HIS BROTHERS TO DELIVER PARIS, AND OF THE VICTORY WHICH THEY HAD.

When Roger had been proclaimed conqueror in this hard-fought battle the arms and horse of his dead opponent were made over to him as the spoils of victory; but our Courteous Prince kept none of them for himself, being content with having established his right to bear the Trojan eagle as his crest. First he bestowed Durindana on King Gradasso according to agreement—for they had made a covenant together, that whichever came first to battle with the Tartar should maintain both claims against him,—but Gold Bridle and the armour, which Count Roland had abandoned in his frenzy, he gave as a gift to King Agramant in testimony of his loyalty towards him. Then he fell back, weak from loss of blood, upon the earth; and King Agramant bade his henchmen lift him up and carry him to his own tent, where he might be well tended till his wounds should be healed. There he lay wrestling with death for several weeks, scarce able to stir hand or foot, so grievous were the hurts he had received, but watched day and night by the King of Tunis and his vassals, as a sick boy is nursed by a loving mother.

Meanwhile Raynald had made all speed to reach the castle of Sir Aldigier, who gave him the glad news that Malibran and Vivian were already saved, and that it was Prince Roger and the great Princess Marfisa who had wrought their deliverance. When he heard this Raynald went on to his own home in Montalbano, where he found

his whole family assembled and rejoicing over the good fortune of their kinsmen. There he was greeted with great joy by them all; nevertheless he was loth to tarry in the place, and desired to return to his post with the Christian army. So after spending a couple of days at home he set out again on the road to Paris, and took with him his four brothers, whose names were Sir Richard, Sir Alured, Sir Walter, and Sir Richardetto; as well as Sir Malibran and Sir Vivian, his cousins. Moreover, he had under his command a chosen band of soldiers, seven hundred in number, each man of whom was well seasoned to warfare and ready to follow his leader to the death. This regiment was quartered at Montalbano, and Raynald never took them away save in case of urgent need; but now, hearing that Charlemagne had been driven back behind his walls, he bade them make ready for battle and follow him to the relief of Paris.

They had not gone far before they met a knight of valiant aspect, who bore a black shield traversed by a silver bar, and whose person and device were alike unknown to them all. Richardetto happened just then to be riding at the head of the troop, wherefore the stranger challenged him first to joust, since he perceived that he bore himself like a gallant cavalier. The young Paladin gleefully accepted the challenge, thinking: "I will give this foreigner a rare fall, to make him shy for the future of provoking a knight of Clairmont;" but the result proved contrary to his hopes. For his adversary sat firm on his seat, while Richardetto was borne off his saddle and laid on his back a yard behind his horse's heels. Then Sir Alured galloped forward to avenge his brother's fall, but met with the same misfortune; while no better luck attended Sir Walter, who came next to prove himself against the stranger. Sir Richard, Sir Malibran, and Sir Vivian were all eager to take the fourth turn; but Raynald motioned them back. For he thought within himself: "It is time for us to proceed on our journey, and I have no leisure to wait till you have all been overthrown in succession." Howbeit he spake not his thought aloud, lest he should wound the pride of his

kinsmen; but he laid his lance in the rest, and spurred forward to encounter the stranger.

Now was seen a different kind of contest from the former, for both knights sat firm in their saddles, while their lances splintered and broke, and their chargers dashed one against the other with such a shock as threw both of them backward on their haunches. The noble Bayard sprang up again in a trice none the worse for the encounter, but the other broke his back, so that he died. His rider, however, was unhurt, and leapt to his feet when he perceived that his horse lay dead; and, drawing forth his sword, he said: "Sir Knight, I bear you no malice for my charger's death, which has happened through no fault of yours, but in fair and honourable combat. Nevertheless, I pray you, let us do battle with our swords; for I should be sorely grieved to part from such an antagonist as you till we had proved our prowess to the uttermost. Remain on horseback, if you will, and I will encounter you on foot: I am willing to allow you every advantage rather than forego the pleasure of a contest." "Willingly will I grant your request," answered Raynald; "but I will take no advantage over you. In proof of which I will send away my comrades and escort, so that none shall stay beside us except my groom, who must hold my horse apart while we fight. And I promise you that if we both survive the battle, I will give you another charger out of my stables no whit inferior to the one you have lost." The stranger made due acknowledgment of our Paladin's courtesy, and Raynald bade his kinsmen and soldiers go before him to the castle of Sir Aldigier, where they had arranged to pass the night.

As soon as they were out of sight Sir Raynald threw Bayard's rein to his groom, and addressed himself to battle against the stranger. Seldom has such a combat been seen, for each knight felt the need of employing his utmost skill; each struck hard and terrible blows against his adversary, but every cut was parried and every thrust turned cleverly aside. For both of them fought with the greatest caution as well as admirable valour, each knowing that a single mistake might cost him his life. Thus they strove together

till sundown, and neither could lay claim to any advantage; but as the darkness thickened apace, Sir Raynald lifted up his voice and said: "Sir Knight, to fight at random in the dark can bring no honour to either of us. Come with me therefore, I pray you, to my cousin's dwelling, where you shall be fitly entertained for the night." The stranger joyfully accepted the invitation, and the two knights proceeded to join the others at the castle of Sir Aldigier, who received them all hospitably according to his wont.

Now in the morning, as the stranger was crossing the courtyard, he met a magnificent charger led by Sir Raynald's groom, who accosted him reverently, and said: "Valiant Sir Knight, the Paladin Raynald entreats you to do him the favour of accepting this horse in place of the one which was killed under you yesterday." "Sir Raynald! what Sir Raynald is this?" asked the knight in an eager voice. "My master, who had the honour to cross swords with you yesterday," replied the groom; to which the stranger answered not a word, but ran to the place where the knights of Clairmont were assembled, and fell down at the feet of Raynald, exclaiming: "Pardon! pardon! Sir Raynald, for having challenged you yesterday to battle. Verily I knew not who you were, else had I offered myself at once to obey your least command. For I am Guy, the son of Hammon, whom men call Sir Guy the Wild; yea, I am your own brother, who have hitherto dwelt in the forests by the Danube, but am now come hither to greet my kindred, and to follow you whithersoever you lead, if you disdain not to accept my service." "By my faith, brother Guy," replied Raynald, laughing, as he raised the stranger from his knees—"by my faith thou couldst not give me better proof of thy birth than by thy fashion of belabouring me with thy sword! Hadst thou come meekly to encounter me, I had doubted the truth of thy story; for the lion sires not the fawn, nor the eagle begets the turtle-dove. But by the might of thine arm I know thee for Duke Hammon's son; and right glad I am to welcome so gallant a warrior as my brother. Nay, lad, but the Emperor shall create thee a Paladin of France ere many days be past; for although

thou art the youngest of us all, thou hast proved thyself a match for the best of us." Thereupon these noble brothers embraced each other lovingly, after which Sir Guy the Wild greeted in like manner his other brothers and his cousins, to the great joy of them all, and offered himself to bear them company to Paris.

Sir Aldigier also joined himself to his kinsmen, and brought his men-at-arms with him; and as soon as they were ready they set out all together upon their journey, making as much haste as they possibly could.

Presently they descried two other knights, one apparelled all in white and mounted on a snow-white charger, the other with arms and horse as black as jet. From afar Sir Raynald recognised them, and knew them to be Grypho the White and Aquilas the Black, the gallant sons of Oliver. So he rode forward to greet them, and asked if they would bear their part in his perilous enterprise, to which the valiant youths consented gladly, being eager to win themselves renown and to rescue their father and the Emperor. Just at this moment Sansonet likewise came up, and Raynald, who had known him long since in Palestine, invited him to join in the adventure,—a proposal which Sansonet accepted with ardour, since to his loyal spirit the honour of Charlemagne was almost dearer than his own.

After this the Paladins continued their journey for some days, till one evening they came in sight of the walls of Paris, and marked how the Saracen camp was pitched beneath them. Then Sir Raynald called his kinsmen and comrades together, and said: "Behold, we are few in number, and the enemies that oppose us are many; nevertheless the fortunes of all Christendom may hang upon the issue of our attack. Wherefore it behoves us to act warily, and take such advantage as our honour allows us, lest, if we be vain and foolhardy, we put in jeopardy the lives of our friends. Now if we make our assault by night we shall reap a double profit; for, on the one hand, we shall take the enemy unawares in the hour of sleep, and, on the other, the darkness will hide from them the fewness of our numbers. I advise, therefore, that we should seek cover in the woods

till past midnight, and then sally forth to attack the Pagans in their tents."

All the Paladins approved this prudent counsel, and accordingly Sir Raynald ordered everything as he had proposed. He concealed his regiment and all his comrades in a neighbouring wood till midnight; but then he drew them up in order of battle, and gave them his commands for the enterprise. "The Paladins," he said, "will begin the combat, and the soldiers will follow close after us to second our attack. But that we may know each other in the darkness, let every man bind a white kerchief round his elbow, and let 'France and Clairmont!' be our battle-cry."

With these words he turned Bayard's head and galloped towards the camp, accompanied by the band of Paladins, and followed at a little distance by his faithful regiment and Sir Aldigier's men-at-arms. First our knights encountered a Saracen picket and slew every man of them before they could raise an alarm; next, with a little more trouble, they did the like by a numerous guard, which King Agramant had set to defend the entrance to the camp; and so they burst through the Saracen entrenchments, and rode into the very midst of the tents, while three-fourths of their enemies were still sunk in unsuspecting sleep. By tens and by hundreds the Pagans were slain around their path, till the whole camp was thoroughly roused, and such clamour and confusion arose as no words can possibly describe. Some leapt out unarmed from their tents, and rushed unwittingly upon their death; one would snatch up a sword, another a pike, and a third a mace; some had no defence but their helmets, others bore nothing but their shields, and others again dashed forth in hastily fastened cuirasses, or with half-laced greaves swinging loosely against their legs. Not one in a thousand found leisure to put on his whole armour; but naked or equipped the same destruction overtook them all. Soon Sir Raynald and Sir Guy might number their slain by the thousand; and the other knights fell but little short of them in the havoc which they made among their foes. And just as the confusion was at its height, the soldiers appeared upon the scene,

whose shouts of "France and Clairmont!" struck fresh terror into the hearts of the Pagans, making them suppose that a powerful army was assailing them.

For three hours the slaughter raged, and the Christians lost scarcely a man, while the lines were cumbered with the dead bodies of Africans and Spaniards. At last the morning broke and revealed to the Saracens that their enemies were but a handful in number; whereupon they began to pluck up heart, and made a rally in the hope of driving them out of the camp. But the daylight showed the Emperor also what was happening; and when he understood the matter he ordered a general sortie from the city, to attack the Pagan camp on the opposite side.

Bitterly did the Saracens now regret the late quarrels among their chiefs, which had deprived them of well-nigh all their principal warriors. For Mandricard was dead; Roger was lying helpless on his sick-bed; Marfisa, after hanging Brunello, had gone off on a private expedition; and Rodomont had ridden away in a huff, proclaiming that henceforth he would be the enemy of Christian and Saracen alike. Thus their army had now few leaders able to encounter the knights of Clairmont, while no weight of numbers could prevail against the trained and disciplined valour of Raynald's battalion. And when Charlemagne with his troops from Paris came to join in the fray, their resistance was speedily ended, and they broke and fled in all directions, hotly followed by the victorious Christians.

Thus King Agramant was forced to abandon his camp and all his baggage; indeed, he counted himself fortunate in that he escaped with his life, and was able to take Prince Roger along with him. He laid the sick Prince on a litter which he commanded his henchmen to bear, while he himself rode by the side, surrounded by the bravest of his warriors. In this fashion he retreated from Paris, and came to the strong city of Arles, which was held by a garrison of his troops. There he gradually gathered together the remnants of his beaten army, and busied himself in fortifying the place still more strongly, expecting every day that the Emperor would march thither to besiege him.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW ROGER, BRADAMANTE, AND MARFISA NEARLY CAME TO BLOWS.

KING AGRAMANT was not left long in suspense, for after a fortnight's delay the Emperor brought his army to Arles, and pitched his camp beneath the walls of the city. With him were all the knights of Clairmont, the noble Sansonet, and the twin sons of Oliver with their father, as well as Ogier the Dane, who was now recovered from his wound. Only Sir Brandimart, the friend of Roland, was absent; for he had gone in search of the Count when he heard the sad tidings of his madness, and had taken with him his wife, the fair and gentle lady Lilias, who loved to share his perils and adventures. The Emperor could well spare him just at present, seeing that so many gallant knights were now collected beneath his banner, who were amply sufficient to aid him in the siege of Arles.

Perhaps you may have wondered why Bradamante remained beside her parents at Montalbano, and went not forth with her brothers to attack the Saracen camp. The truth is, she was sick in mind and body, being sorely afflicted at the long absence of her beloved Prince Roger. Over and over again she would read the letter which he had sent her by the hand of Hippalca, and she found some comfort in gazing upon the writing of her betrothed. But it was not enough to console her for her loneliness; and although he had promised to return to her as soon as he could, she knew only too well how many accidents might happen to prevent him, so that at times she would exclaim

in the bitterness of despair: "I shall never look upon his face again!" To add to her trouble, she presently heard how he had joined company with the great Princess Marfisa, and thereupon a new fear tormented her spirit. For she knew by repute that Marfisa was very comely in face and person, and she thought: "Will not Roger forget me, who am far away, and give his love to this Marfisa, who is ever present to help him at his need? Woe is me! what profit is there in my life if my lover forsake me? Would to Heaven that I had never been born!" This fear so preyed upon her mind that she could neither eat not sleep, but lay grievously ill for many days, till her handmaids began to fear for her life.

But presently there came a knight to Montalbano, bringing tidings from the seat of war, who narrated how Prince Roger had killed the Tartar Mandricard, but was himself wounded nearly to death; and how King Agramant had been driven from Paris, and was now entrenching himself in the city of Arles. He added that Roger's hurts were almost healed; that Marfisa was once more with the Saracen army; and that it was commonly reported that they would soon be joined together in marriage. Of course this report was sheer falsehood; but it seemed so likely to be true that the unhappy Bradamante believed it. Then her grief was far more bitter than before; yet her indignation at her lover's fancied treachery proved stronger than her sorrow, so that she leapt from her bed and bade Hippalca bring her armour without delay. For she was resolved on making the best of her way to Arles, hoping that she might wreak her vengeance on the hated Marfisa, and then meet the death for which she longed at the hands of Prince Roger.

With many lamentations she buckled on her armour and girded her sword to her side, after which she looked about for the stoutest lance she could find; and it happened that her eye lighted on the enchanted bar of gold, which her cousin Astulf had entrusted to her keeping. Bradamante, of course, knew no more about its magic properties than the jovial Duke to whom it belonged; but she chose it for her present adventure simply because it was the toughest

weapon in her store. Then she went towards the stables, considering what horse she should ride, when suddenly she bethought her of Rabican, and said: "Well I know that my cousin would not grudge me the use of his charger for this enterprise, since nowhere can I meet with a better." So she led out the son of Flame and Wind from his stall, and saddled him with her own hands; after which she vaulted on his back, and bade adieu to the castle of Montalbano.

On the road she fell in with King Rodomont, who straightway challenged her to combat; but at their first encounter he went down before the golden lance, and Bradamante took Frontin out of his possession as the lawful spoil of her victory. Rejoicing greatly that she had recovered Prince Roger's gallant steed, she pursued her journey to Arles; and as she drew near to the place, she summoned a shepherd boy to her side, and offered him a rich reward if he would do her bidding faithfully. The lad promised eagerly to obey her, whereupon she delivered Frontin's rein into his hand, and said: "Take this charger into the city and inquire for Prince Roger, whom his comrades surname the Courteous. And when you have found him, give the rein into his hand, and say to him: 'Sir Prince, a warrior whom you have grievously wronged restores to you the horse of which you were robbed; and challenges you to ride the same to battle beyond the walls as soon as your wounds are fully healed.'"

The lad therefore took Frontin into the city and delivered him together with Bradamante's message to Prince Roger; while the valiant damsel herself sounded her trumpet before the gates, defying the bravest among the Saracens to withstand her in single combat. It happened that at this moment a great company of knights was assembled round King Agramant on the ramparts, and as soon as Bradamante's challenge was heard young Serpentin of Tunis besought his King's permission to prove himself against the unknown champion. Accordingly he rode forth to the encounter, but was unhorsed at the first touch of the enchanted lance. With great generosity Bradamante for-

bore to press her advantage, but caught his horse by the bridle and helped him to mount again, saying: "Return into the city, Sir Knight, and bid your King send me a champion more practised in warfare."

The young knight thanked her for her courtesy, and hastened to deliver her message; whereupon Sir Ferralu turned to King Agramant and said: "Grant me the next turn, I pray you, that if I fall Sir Serpentin may feel no shame for his overthrow." The King willingly agreed to his request, and Sir Ferralu rode forth from the gate, saluting Bradamante courteously with his hand. Then the damsel cried to him: "Sir Knight, I pray you tell me your name;" and he answered: "I am Ferralu the Spaniard, who seek the honour of proving myself against you." "You I may hardly refuse to meet," replied Bradamante, "yet I would that another were in your place." "Who is that?" asked Sir Ferralu; at which the damsel felt the hot blood rush to her cheeks, as with faltering voice she murmured the name of "Roger." "Prithee do me the favour of encountering me first," answered the Spaniard, "and if I am overthrown I will return forthwith to the city and send out Prince Roger to meet you." So they addressed themselves to the jousting, in which Ferralu fared no better than his predecessor, since no one could stand for a moment against Duke Astulf's golden lance. But Bradamante held his horse for him, saying: "Return and perform your promise;" so Ferralu rode back to his place and told Roger that the strange knight demanded to fight with him.

The Courteous Prince was quite at a loss to know who in the world could have a quarrel against him; for Bradamante's stature was much less than that of King Rodomont, and he could think of no one else whom he had offended. Nevertheless he willingly accepted the challenge, and bade his squire make haste to fetch his armour; and while he was arming himself he turned to the Spaniard and said: "Know you, Sir Ferralu, who this stranger may be and wherefore he challenges me to battle?" "For a moment," replied the other, "the warrior raised his visor, and his face

was like the face of Richardetto, the son of Hammon; but I know that Richardetto lacks the skill to bear himself in this fashion; wherefore I conjecture that the stranger is his twin-sister Bradamante, who is said to be so like him in countenance that their own mother scarce knows them apart." When Roger heard this his heart grew suddenly faint within him and a great trembling seized his limbs, for he thought that something must have occurred to change Bradamante's love for him to hatred. He could not guess how he had offended her, but the very idea made him feel weak and miserable, so that he stood a while in doubt whether he should go forth to battle against her.

But while he doubted Marfisa made up her mind to seize the opportunity for herself; so she laid her lance in rest and rode out of the gate without asking leave of any man. Bradamante meanwhile had been considering where to aim her lance so as to do Prince Roger no hurt and yet prove herself worthy to encounter him. Perceiving, to her surprise, that some other warrior was coming against her, she demanded her antagonist's name; and when she heard that Marfisa stood before her—Marfisa whom she suspected of having supplanted her in the affections of her Prince—her spirit was inflamed to fury, and she thought only how she might disgrace her fancied rival before the eyes of Roger. So she rushed madly to the attack, and straightway laid the great Princess flat on the ground, for which success she had the golden lance to thank, since Marfisa was as nearly as possible her equal in skill and valour. Amazed at finding herself unhorsed so easily, a thing which had never happened to her before, Marfisa plucked out her sword; and Bradamante, if she had been dealing with any other antagonist, would have dismounted of her own accord to maintain the struggle on equal terms. But she was so incensed against Marfisa that she pressed her advantage to the utmost, and spurring Rabican forward to encounter her knocked her down with the magic lance for the second time.

By this time half the Saracen army was gathered together on the ramparts to witness this wonderful combat,

and the Christians, too, were coming forth from their tents and glorying in the success of their champion. Finding themselves thus in sight of one another, the hostile forces seized the occasion for a skirmish; the Africans and Spaniards dashed out to succour Marfisa, and with equal ardour the Frenchmen ranged themselves on the side of Bradamante. In the confusion that followed the warrior damsels were separated; but it was not long before Bradamante found herself face to face with Prince Roger. Her first thought on beholding him was to take vengeance for the treachery imputed to him; but even now her love was stronger than her wrath, so she lowered her lance and cried: "Traitor, get thee gone from my sight! It is enough that thou hast deceived and deserted me; henceforth seek only how thou mayest avoid me!" With these words she turned against a company of the Saracens, every man of whom she unhorsed with the golden lance; and in this manner she went careering over the field, vanquishing every foe whom she met, so that she appeared to be a match for King Agramant's whole army at once. Very soon the enemy were driven back within the city; and then Prince Roger found an opportunity of riding up to Bradamante and saying: "Hear me, most noble damsel —for pity's sake, I entreat thee, hear me, for I swear that I have done thee no wrong." Bradamante could scarcely believe her ears; nevertheless hope rose again in her heart; and bowing her head in token of her willingness to listen, she galloped away in search of a place where she might speak with her lover in private.

She rode, with Roger following close behind her, till she came to a quiet little valley, in the midst of which was a grove of solemn cypresses. Among the trees was erected a new and splendid tomb of white marble, with an inscription in letters of gold on the front; but both Roger and Bradamante were too busy with their own thoughts to care about reading the writing, which would have told them who it was that lay buried there. They dismounted at once and tied their horses to the trunk of a cypress; and then the damsel began to tell her Prince about the rumours

which had come to her ears. But she had hardly time to finish her first sentence before she was interrupted by the Princess Marfisa, who had followed the lovers to the grove, and now clamorously demanded to finish her battle with Bradamante. At this the noble damsel's wrath was kindled anew, and drawing out her sword she ran upon Marfisa to slay her; but the Princess parried the blow and gathered all her strength to return it. Before she could strike, however, Prince Roger thrust himself between them, and, taking them unawares, cleverly succeeded in disarming them both; for he snatched the swords from their hands and laid them down at the foot of a tree. Then he placed himself in front to guard them; but the angry Marfisa was not to be balked of her purpose so easily. Deeming his interference an insult to herself, she turned the fury of her wrath against him, and clasping him suddenly round the waist, she wrestled with all her might to dislodge him from his position in front of her sword. But Roger stood firm as a rock, and refused to surrender the weapon; whereupon Marfisa's rage waxed yet more furious, and she shrieked out insults against him, calling him villain and thief, and threatening that his obstinacy should cost him his life.

How this three-cornered quarrel would have ended, if it had been suffered to run its course, I know not; but happily it was cut short by as strange an event as ever you heard of. The earth trembled and shook, the cypresses bent as though struck by a furious tempest, and from the marble tomb in the midst of them proceeded an unearthly voice commanding them to cease from the struggle. "Stay your hands from strife," cried the terrible voice, "and let there be peace and love between you from henceforth; for it is a monstrous and horrible thing for a sister to lift her hand against her brother. You, Marfisa, are twin-sister to my beloved Prince Roger; and I took you both as orphans from the breast of your mother, who died on the day of your birth. Orphans you were indeed, since your father had already met his death at the hands of Trojan, the father of King Agramant; nevertheless you were not left without good protection in the world. For I, the enchanter Atlas,

cared for you, and reared you as though you were my own offspring, using all my magic arts without stint to serve you. But alas! on an unlucky day Marfisa was stolen, while yet a child, out of my hands, and carried by pirates to the Court of Arabia. Thenceforth I had none but Roger to love; and thou knowest, my Prince, if I gave thee not good proof of my affection. In truth, I never cared for aught in comparison with thy welfare, and all my endeavours for these many years have had this and nothing else for their end. But a few days since it was declared to me that I must die, and that you would soon afterwards come hither to fight; wherefore I commanded the spirits to build me a sepulchre in this place, which my ghost might haunt till I had revealed to you the truth of this matter. Put away, then, all enmity, O my children, and live henceforward in brotherly love together, that the spirit of your foster-father may be at peace. Farewell, my beloved ones, farewell! ye will never hear of Atlas more."

With this loving adieu the voice of the old enchanter fell silent for evermore, but the hatred of his noble foster-children was turned to undying love, and with tears in his eyes Prince Roger embraced his sister. Next he turned to Bradamante, and asked her: "Sweet my love, art thou now content?" And the noble damsel answered: "I am content, O my knight; and never again will I doubt concerning thy faith." Then said Roger to Marfisa: "My sister, embrace this damsel, I pray thee, and receive her into thy love, seeing that she is dearer to me than my life, and to her have I plighted my troth." So Marfisa and Bradamante embraced each other, forgetting all their former enmity, and vowing that they would live together thenceforward as comrades and loving sisters.

Presently Marfisa spake again to her brother, and said: "Hast thou not heard, my Roger, how our father was slain by the father of King Agramant? Truly it behoves us not to consort with the son of him who made us orphans; wherefore I will go this very evening to the camp of Charlemagne and enrol myself to serve beneath his banner. As my father was a Christian, so will I be also; and as he

was the enemy of King Trojan, so will I be the enemy of Trojan's son King Agramant." "Go thy way with Bradamante, my sister," replied the Prince, "and believe that it grieves me beyond measure that I am not able to bear thee company. But Agramant has been very good to me in the hour of my need, and my allegiance is still due to him as my lord; wherefore my honour bids me remain by his side till the issue of this war be decided."

Marfisa admitted the justice of her brother's words, and Bradamante loved her noble knight the better for his faithfulness in cleaving to his duty; so the two valiant damsels rode side by side to the camp of the Emperor, while Prince Roger returned against his will to the city, and remained in his post beneath the standard of his King.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW ROGER FOUGHT WITH RAYNALD IN SINGLE COMBAT, AND HOW KING AGRAMANT BROKE THE TRUCE AND HAD TO FLY FROM FRANCE.

DID you ever suspect that the great Princess Marfisa would turn out to be Prince Roger's twin-sister? I am sure you didn't; and for my part I was never more surprised than when I read it in the old poem from which I am taking these stories. However, there it is in black and white, and I am heartily glad to have found it out; for our friends were getting dreadfully mixed up in their ill-timed quarrels, and I don't see how they could ever have got clear of them but for the discovery of this lucky relationship. The only pity was that they could not remain together as comrades in arms; but that was impossible for the reasons that you know already. So Roger returned alone to Arles, while Bradamante and Marfisa took their way to the Christian encampment, and came into the presence of Charlemagne. There the Princess kneeled before the Emperor's throne, saying: "Sir Emperor, I have never yet bent the knee to any man, because I never found one worthy to command my homage. But now I kneel to thee willingly, deeming thee greatest among rulers; that as my father was thy friend and ally, so I too may fight beneath thy banner and do thy bidding so long as I live." When Charlemagne heard this, he and all that were with him rejoiced greatly; and he raised Marfisa from her knees, saying: "My daughter, I gladly accept the offer of thy service, and I thank thee for coming now to my aid. Truly I knew thy father well, and

held him ever in high honour; and in like manner will I honour thee, of whose deeds the whole earth has heard." Then the Princess was welcomed by Sir Raynald, and by all the Paladins in turn; and the next day she was baptized by Turpin, Archbishop of Paris, and swore fealty to the Emperor as his vassal.

On the same day King Agramant received evil tidings from home; for a messenger arrived in hot haste, bringing word that a host of Nubians had overrun his kingdom of Tunis, and were laying siege to his chief seaport Biserta. (You will find out from the next chapter how these Nubians came there; for the present our business is with the Saracens in Arles, till we have seen how they were driven out of France.) Immediately the King called a council of war, and repeated the news which he had learnt from the messenger, saying: "I hear that Tunis has fallen a prey to a vast army of Nubians, who have wasted the country, and are even now besieging the strong cities. Wherefore give me your counsel, I pray you, whether we ought to depart instantly out of France to the defence of our own land, or whether it were better for us to remain here for a time, till we have tried once more to break the power of Charlemagne for ever." As he spoke he turned his eyes upon Marsilius, who was next in place after himself; and the Spanish King rose up and answered him, saying: "Lord King, I bid thee put no trust in the vain babblings of this messenger; doubtless the fellow has been frightened by some small squadron of roving Arabs, who may have carried off a few cattle from the lands of Tunis. For it is plainly impossible that an army of Nubians can have marched over the Libyan deserts, which even a caravan of camels can hardly cross. Yet even granted that the Nubians may have rained down from the sky, they will surely perish immediately, seeing that they are ill practised in warfare and have no chieftains of renown to lead them. Fear not, then, for thy realm; but strive to vanquish the Emperor once for all before Roland can return to his side; for while the Count is away, the Christians fight without their right arm." Thus spoke the King of Spain, seeking to persuade King Agramant to remain in France.

But the wise King Sobrin perceived that the counsel of Marsilius proceeded not from single-hearted loyalty to his lord, but that he spoke thus because he feared to be left alone in Europe to bear the brunt of Charlemagne's vengeance. Wherefore Sobrin rose up in turn from his seat and bowed himself before King Agramant, and said: "Lord King, when thou didst first propose this war against the Emperor, I alone of all thy counsellors sought to turn thee from thy purpose; and well I wot that it was imputed to me for cowardice. Nevertheless, I have followed thee faithfully, and have not turned back in the day of thy misfortune, as some others have done who were loudest in persuading thee to the enterprise. Now, therefore, hearken to my words, and think not because I counsel thee to prudence that I am lacking in zeal for thy service. Behold, we are few in number, for Prince Mandricard is dead, and King Rodomont is gone away in his anger; Marfisa also has joined herself to our enemies, and all the advantage of the war is theirs. True it is that Count Roland is away; and we ought to offer up thanksgivings for his absence, since otherwise there would hardly be a man of us left alive. But Raynald is with them, and his brothers, and their valiant sister Bradamante; Brandimart also, who is a second Roland for valour, and Ogier the Dane are there, with Oliver and his gallant sons, who are lately returned to France. Of a truth, my lord, I reckon that we are become much weaker than our enemies; and I count it sheer madness for us to lose our dominions at home and gain nothing but defeat and death abroad. Nevertheless, I do not advise thee to depart without one effort to gain the victory; only I give not my voice for a general battle, in which we must certainly be overwhelmed. Send rather to Charlemagne, and propose a single combat to decide the issue of the war, and make an agreement with him that the king whose champion is overthrown shall do homage to the other, paying him tribute from henceforward as his vassal. And if the Emperor accepts this challenge, behold, here is Roger in thy camp to be our champion, whose valour is surely sufficient to defeat the bravest of our adversaries."

Now Sobrin's counsel found favour with King Agramant, so that he sent a herald to the Emperor the same afternoon to propose a single combat on these terms, saying that Prince Roger was willing to maintain the Saracen cause against any knight who might be chosen to encounter him; and Charlemagne was too noble to refuse such a challenge, even though the course of the war was all in his favour; but he generously renounced his advantage, and bade Sir Raynald make ready to do battle on the morrow morning. For next after Count Roland he put most confidence in the fiery Raynald, and deemed that the contest was already as good as won when he had named him to fight as his champion. At the news of this agreement there was great joy throughout both the hostile armies; for the common soldiers had grown weary of the war, and were heartily glad to find that everything was to be settled without further trouble or danger to them. But most joyful of all was Sir Raynald, who counted himself honoured above measure in being chosen as the Emperor's champion, and vowed that he would prove himself worthy to be trusted with the fortunes of all Christendom. Only Roger was very sorrowful, and his spirit was troubled within him, when he heard that Charlemagne's choice had fallen upon Sir Raynald; not that he feared the knight of Clairmont, or any other warrior upon earth, but because he was very loth to meet the brother of his Bradamante as an enemy. But he could not go back from his word, which he had pledged to King Agramant: so with a heavy heart he returned to his lodging, and lay awake all night brooding over the evil fortune which seemed always to persecute him. For how could he hope ever to marry his lady if he defeated and slew her brother? And Bradamante was as sorrowful as her lover, seeing that whatever were the issue of the combat she would fall into great affliction. For between two such knights the battle would certainly be fought out to the death, and she would be left to mourn the loss either of her dear brother or of her affianced husband.

Early in the morning a company from each army came out to prepare the lists. They enclosed an ample space

with cords and stakes, and raised an altar of stones and turf at either end, and then gave the signal that all was in readiness. Thereupon the Pagan hosts trooped forth from the city, and took their stand at a little distance from the enclosure; but King Agramant advanced from the midst of them, riding on a splendid bay charger, and passed within the barrier. At his right hand rode Prince Roger on Frontin, equipped in full armour except that his head was bare; while his helmet was carried by King Marsilius, who rode upon Agramant's left, and disdained not to serve as squire to the Courteous Prince. Likewise the Christian army came forth from their encampment, and ranged themselves on the opposite side of the lists: while the Emperor Charlemagne rode forward to face King Agramant, having Sir Raynald, mounted on Bayard, at his right hand, and Ogier the Dane, who carried Raynald's helmet, on his left.

Charlemagne first laid his hand upon one of the altars, and swore a great oath that he would neither interrupt this combat, nor refuse to abide by the issue of it; but that, if Raynald were slain, he would do homage to the King of Tunis, and pay him tribute thenceforward as his vassal. Then King Agramant laid his hand upon the other altar, and swore in like manner to maintain the conditions of the fight, as he himself had proposed them; and when they had thus pledged their faith the King and the Emperor saluted each other courteously like noble adversaries, and retired without the lists.

Next the champions came forward in their turn: Roger promised that if his King did anything to disturb the combat contrary to the agreement, he would straightway renounce his allegiance and profess himself the vassal of Charlemagne; and in like manner Raynald vowed that he would pass over to the Saracen forces if the Emperor should interfere in the battle.

These ceremonies ended, the champions separated and put on their helmets, and immediately the trumpets sounded for the onset. They rushed together, not in blind fury of hatred, but coolly and circumspectly, each being intent on giving no advantage to his adversary; and thus they con-

tended with such skilful wariness and such quickness of eye and limb as I cannot pretend to describe, and you would hardly believe if I did. Prince Roger, however, considered that he was fighting against the brother of his lady love, and assailed him so cautiously that to all the bystanders it appeared as if he must soon be worsted: for he cared only to parry Sir Raynald's strokes, or if he delivered a cut himself, he aimed it so as to do the Paladin no hurt. But Raynald had no such cause for forbearance, and put forth his utmost strength to defeat the Prince: wherefore all the Pagan chieftains trembled and gave up their cause for lost, deeming their champion quite overmatched, and marvelling to see him so sluggish in dealing his blows. And Agramant especially began to upbraid the wise King Sobrin for having persuaded him to propose the single combat, forgetting that he himself was the only one to blame, since he had been free to take his counsellor's advice or leave it as he chose. But that is just the way of most people: if their friends' advice turns out well, they take great credit to themselves for following it; but if things chance to go ill, they lay all the blame upon their counsellors.

Still, however, Sir Raynald could win no real advantage, for Roger, though loth to slay or hurt a knight of Clairmont, had no mind to be slain himself; and if he was slow to smite, he parried every blow of his antagonist with perfect skill. So that the battle seemed likely to last all day, unless the Saracen champion should make some mistake in his defence by which Sir Raynald might get a chance to overcome him.

But there was one friend of ours to whom this fight between the lover and brother of Bradamante was hateful above everything, and who resolved to stop it at all hazards —I mean the kind enchantress Melissa, who had set her heart on accomplishing the marriage of Prince Roger and his lady. To this end she transformed herself into the likeness of the gigantic king Rodomont, making herself appear as though she were equipped in his armour of dragon's hide, with his enormous sword and shield at her side. Then she called up a spirit, and bade him take the

shape of a horse for her to ride; and in this guise she came into the presence of King Agramant, and with a frown on her brow cried out in an angry voice: "What folly is this, Sir King? Are you mad, that you have trusted a youth like Roger to maintain our cause against the bravest warrior in France? Stop the fight at once, and rush with all your men to attack our enemies; and fear not to break your oath since I am here, and my prowess will gain you the victory."

Now Agramant supposed that this was really Rodomont returned to his allegiance: and he rejoiced more in the support of the terrible Algerian than if a whole army of lesser men had come to reinforce him. Persuaded that none could stand against him if Rodomont fought on his side, he allowed himself to forget his oath and the truce to which his honour was pledged; and calling upon his men to follow him, he dashed forward to assail the Christians. But though taken unawares, the gallant Paladins and their followers spurred eagerly to meet him, being filled with rage at the perfidy of their foes. Thus the single combat was brought to an end, and a general encounter took its place, while Roger and Raynald stayed their hands and stood aside, till they could know for certain which party had broken the agreement; for they had been so intent on their own struggle that neither of them had seen what had happened, and they knew not whether Charlemagne or Agramant was in fault.

Meanwhile Melissa vanished out of sight as soon as she saw the truce broken and the champions' combat interrupted, while the fight waxed hotter and hotter between the armies. All the morning Marfisa had stood by the side of Bradamante in restless impatience at having to witness a battle in which she could take no part, like a hound that strains at the leash when its fellow is loosed for the chase. But now she plucked out her sword and smote through half a dozen helmets with as many strokes, while Bradamante pranced by her side with the golden lance in her hand, which overthrew every adversary whom it struck. Countless were the numbers of Pagans who fell beneath the

weapons of these valiant damsels; and they were well seconded by all their followers, and especially by the brave company of Paladins.

Very soon King Agramant perceived that he was being beaten, and looked round for Rodomont, by whose instigation, as he imagined, he had been led to break the truce. But the form of the gigantic Algerian was nowhere to be seen, since Melissa, who wore it, had long since vanished from the field. King Sobrin also was gone, for he had retreated within the city, protesting that he was guiltless of his leader's perjury; and he was followed thither by King Marsilius, who was persuaded that so great wickedness must meet with a terrible punishment. Moreover, doubting whether they could find safety anywhere on dry land, these two kings retired on board their ships, which lay moored in the river Rhone within the city; and a great multitude of chiefs and soldiers followed them. So Agramant was left almost alone to bear the brunt of Charlemagne's onset, and perceiving how his people fled in all directions, he too was forced to turn his back and make a push for the city gates. Before he could come there, he ran great risk of his life; for Marfisa thundered down on his track to slay him, because of the ancient feud between their families, and Bradamante also spurred Rabican in pursuit of him, being eager to be avenged on the man who was the chief cause of her separation from Prince Roger. But Agramant's bay charger was very fleet of foot, and had got so good a start that not even Rabican could overtake him, though the point of the golden lance was within a yard of the flying monarch's back as he passed through the gate into the town. He saved his life, indeed; but this day's treachery brought a lasting stain upon his honour, besides ruining for ever his hopes of victory. Of thirty-two kings who had followed his standard as his vassals into France, only eight or nine remained alive; his army had already dwindled to a quarter of its former strength, and now a full half of the remnant were either slain or taken prisoners by the Christians. And so great was the slaughter that the signs of it may be seen to this day; at

least I am told that the ground near Arles is all broken into mounds and barrows, which are said to be the graves of the Saracens who fell that day beneath the swords of the great Emperor's army.

In bitterness of spirit King Agramant rode through the town, looking neither to the right nor to the left, till he came to the quay by the river side, where his galleys and other ships were anchored. There he remained two days on board his ship, embarking such of his people as had escaped from the battle; and on the third day he weighed anchor and sailed down the Rhone before a northerly breeze, with intent to convey this poor remainder of his army back to Africa. In the same ship with him went the wise King Sobrin, whose loyal heart clave to his unhappy lord, and remembered not his former faults against him; and they were accompanied by a fleet of vessels very many in number, but feebly manned and with a scanty complement of soldiers. Meanwhile King Marsilius went his own way into Spain, where he busied himself with fortifying his strong places and gathering together stores and munitions of war; for he feared lest the vengeance of Charlemagne should overtake him suddenly, and find him unready for defence.

Thus were the Moors of Africa and Spain driven back, and all Christendom was delivered from the fear of the Saracens. For never since that day has any nation of Asia or Africa set foot in the fair dominion of France to make war upon its inhabitants.

PART V.

BISERTA.

CHAPTER I.

HOW ASTULF CAME TO BESIEGE BISERTA, AND SENT A FLEET TO FRANCE.

Now we can say farewell to France for a short time, and travel over the sea to Africa without need of chartering a ship for our passage. There we shall meet with Duke Astulf again; and we shall find him in high prosperity and renown, doing good service to the Christian cause in the enemy's country. Shall you not be glad to hear some more about him? I declare I am as pleased to see him again as if I were welcoming an old friend after a year's absence; for I confess that, for my part, I love this jovial Englishman better than any of his comrades. He has an enormous appetite, to be sure, and heartily enjoys a good dinner; but then he never grumbles at having to go without it, or at enduring any other hardship; and what a frank, manly, true-hearted fellow he is!

We left him, if you remember, in company with Virgil in the Earthly Paradise, carrying under his arm the green glass bottle in which the lost wits of Count Roland were stored. Dismounting from Pegasus, Virgil led him to the ivory palace in the midst of the garden, where he gave him some breakfast to refresh him after his night's expedition. And while Astulf was eating, the poet instructed him in all that he would have to do when he returned to earth, and told him of a sign by which he might recognise Count Roland, in spite of the changes which his frenzy had wrought in his appearance.

Then our Englishman was ready to start; so Virgil took

him round to the stables, where the Hippogrif was standing ready with his saddle on his back and the golden bit in his mouth. Bidding his guide a last farewell, with hearty thanks for all his kindness, Astulf vaulted into the saddle; and immediately the Hippogrif spread out its great many-coloured wings, and flew away from the Earthly Paradise. He flew down through the clouds by the way that he came, along the steep slopes of the Mountains of the Moon, till at last he alighted safely before the palace of Prester John the Nubian Emperor. Prester John, I need hardly tell you, received the Duke with great gladness, and begged him to stay awhile as his guest; moreover, he urged him again to ask a boon in return for his service in expelling the Harpies, saying: "Fear not to ask whatsoever thou desirest, Sir Knight; for all that I have is thine, since thou didst deliver me from so grievous a plague." Then Duke Astulf made answer and said: "Sir Emperor, I ask not anything for myself, since a Paladin of France must seek to gain honour, and not riches, by his labours; but for my liege lord the Emperor Charlemagne, and for the welfare of all Christendom, I will make a very grave request. Send with me, I pray thee, a mighty army to invade the realm of Tunis; for by so doing we shall draw away King Agramant out of France, and punish him for warring unjustly against us." "Sir Duke," replied Prester John, "my horses and chariots are thine, my knights also, and my soldiers, and all that I have, to do with according to thy pleasure. Nevertheless I know not how thou wilt accomplish this thing, seeing that an army cannot march across the deserts which separate us from the kingdom of Tunis." "Is it then impossible for any one to cross these deserts?" asked Astulf; and the Emperor answered: "A man may cross them indeed, if the South Wind be still; but for horses and chariots it is always impossible. And even if you march all on foot, you bring yourselves in great peril of your lives; for if the South Wind chance to blow, it will sweep great mountains of sand before it, so that you will all be buried in the sand, and not a man of you will escape alive." "Give me the men, Sir Emperor," answered Duke

Astulf, "and I will promise to lead them safe across the deserts; for in the mountains of the moon I learned how to keep the South Wind quiet. The chariots and horses, in truth, must be left behind; but suffer your chief magician to go along with me, and we will provide chargers for the knights when we come to the other side."

The Nubian Emperor opened his eyes wide with amazement, when he heard Astulf declare that he knew how to quiet the wind; but he had already seen such wonderful proofs of his power, that he was willing to believe him at his word, and promised that everything should be done as he desired. So he sent forth heralds through all his dominions to gather his fighting-men together, and appointed a trysting-day on which they were to assemble outside the chief city. And when they came thither, the broad meadows round about were scarce large enough to give them camping-ground; and the Emperor gave the command over them all to Duke Astulf, who thus found himself at the head of eighty thousand one hundred and two knights and over four hundred thousand infantry.

With these he designed to march against the kingdom of Tunis; but first he must needs make sure of the South Wind, lest it should blow over the desert and bury them all beneath the sand. Now Astulf knew—for Virgil had fully instructed him in this matter—that the South Wind had his dwelling in a cavern at the foot of the Mountains of the Moon, and that he generally went thither to take his rest, when he was tired of blowing over the deserts. Here our duke intended to catch him; so he asked a farmer to lend him a good big sack, tied at the mouth with a running cord. On the evening before he wanted to start with his army across the sands, he slung this sack over his shoulder, and rode the Hippogrif to the South Wind's resting-place. The cave was large and lofty inside, but it had a very narrow entrance, not more than a foot and a half square; and peeping through this hole, Astulf could see by the light of the moon that the South Wind was lying fast asleep on the floor. "Oho! my fine fellow," he whispered, "now I think I've got you safe;" and opening the mouth of his sack, he

fastened it over the little entrance to the cavern. Then he waited patiently till morning; and about an hour before sunrise the Wind jumped up from his sleep, and rushed out of the cave, thinking to take his usual run before breakfast. But of course he bolted headlong into the sack; and as soon as he was inside, Astulf drew the cord across the mouth, and kept him there like a pig in a poke. Struggle as he would, the South Wind could not get out of the sack —I daresay you remember that this was just the way in which the Mother of the Winds used to punish her sons in Andersen's delightful story—and the duke in high glee laid him across his back, and mounting the Hippogrif again, carried him a prisoner to the city of Prester John.

Now he could cross the desert without fear, so he ordered his army to begin the march that very afternoon. He himself, indeed, could easily have flown over on the Hippogrif; but the others must needs go on foot and endure a march of twenty days or more, and our Englishman, like a noble general, determined to share the toils of his soldiers. For he knew that men labour more zealously when they see that their masters are willing to do the like, and besides, he bethought him that he would have no further use for the Hippogrif, and that it was a shame to keep the gallant animal in captivity longer than was necessary. So he patted him on the neck and said, "Brave beast, thou hast done me good service, in return for which I now give thee thy freedom." With these words he let fall the golden bit, and the Hippogrif, no longer constrained to servitude, flew joyfully up into the air, and was soon lost to sight amid the clouds. What became of him afterwards I don't know; some say that he died very soon, but that I don't believe; others, that he is still flying about the air, and that an eclipse of the sun is caused by one of his wings overshadowing it; but that is sheer nonsense, as the Astronomer-Royal will tell you. Most people think—and I fancy they are right—that he flew straight up to the sky, and has ever since been living at his ease in one of the stars, where he finds plenty of good pasture and fresh water; it is said, too, that if any one could find the bit which Duke Astulf dropped in

Nubia, the creature would come back to earth and acknowledge the lucky finder as his master; so if you are anxious to have a Hippogrif in your stables, I advise you to take a Cook's ticket to Nubia and make search for this golden bit. Otherwise, I am afraid, you will never see this wonderful animal except in the frontispiece to these stories, and certainly I shall have nothing more to tell you about him.

After releasing his Hippogrif, Duke Astulf gave the sack with the South Wind inside it to Prester John, charging him not to open it till a month should be fully past; and the Emperor promised to perform his commands. Then they took leave of each other, and Prester John returned to his palace, while the Paladin started with his army across the desert. They had a long and toilsome march over the sands, but Astulf had prudently provided a great number of camels laden with countless stores of food and drink, so that they wanted for nothing by the way, and at length arrived safely on the frontiers of Tunis. When they arrived there, Astulf bade them pitch their tents and remain for three days in one place to refresh them after the fatigue of their march. Nevertheless he was not idle all this time, but set about providing chargers for the horsemen in his army. Prester John's chief magician had accompanied him, as he requested, and he now took this man half-way up a hill, the sides of which were covered with loose stones. There the magician muttered a mighty spell, and began taking up the stones in his right hand and throwing them over his left shoulder; and each stone, as it fell, was changed into the form of a horse, which went cantering down the side of the hill. The people were all assembled in the valley beneath, and caught the horses as they came among them; and in this manner Astulf provided splendid horses for himself and for every one of his eighty thousand one hundred and two knights. And as the horses were born with saddles and bridles and all needful accoutrements, his cavalry was immediately in a fit state to take the field.

Everything being now prepared according to his wish, the Duke led his Nubians through all the dominion of Tunis, scouring the plains day and night, and defeating the

native troops whenever he encountered them. And this, as of course you have guessed, was the great Nubian invasion, of which tidings were brought to King Agramant while Charlemagne was besieging him in Arles.

Astulf's task was all the easier as Agramant had taken away the best of his soldiers to France. He had left, it is true, two chieftains of great repute, named Count Branzard and Sir Bucifar, to guard and rule his country; but the troops which they commanded were feeble and ill practised in arms, for nobody ever dreamed that a great army could come to invade the land. So the Saracens were everywhere defeated; and in one great battle beneath the walls of Biserta they were routed so utterly that Sir Bucifar was taken prisoner, while Count Branzard had to shut himself up in the city and endure all the miseries of a siege. Now Branzard grieved more for the loss of Sir Bucifar than for anything else that had befallen him; and he considered anxiously how he might redeem him out of captivity. Presently he learned that Duke Astulf was captain of the Nubian host, and then he thought he had hit upon a way of rescuing his friend. For the brave young Paladin Dieudonné, the only son of Ogier the Dane, had been kept a prisoner in Tunis for many months; and Count Branzard thought: "Seeing that the leader of our enemies is a Paladin, he will surely be well pleased to deliver his comrade out of prison, and perhaps he will release me Sir Bucifar in exchange for Dieudonné." He sent an embassy, therefore, to Duke Astulf, proposing an exchange of prisoners; to which the Duke consented joyfully, being very glad to obtain the liberty of Dieudonné, whom he dearly loved. So Sir Bucifar went to Biserta to help Branzard in defending the place; while Dieudonné the son of Ogier joined himself to the army of Duke Astulf.

Now our Englishman considered that he had with him a greater number of soldiers than were needed for his present business; wherefore he thought that it would be a good thing to send some fifty thousand of them to France, where they might reinforce the Emperor. (For he knew not as yet how the fortune of the war had turned against

the Saracens; indeed he formed this plan on the very day when King Agramant broke the truce.) The men were all ready to start, and here was Dieudonné eager to be their captain; only there were no ships at hand to convey so great a multitude. In this difficulty Astulf bethought him of Prester John's chief magician, who had already provided him with horses for his cavalry, and asked him whether he could think of any plan to furnish a fleet of transport vessels. "Certainly I can," answered the magician; "only send me a woodcutter, and your need shall soon be supplied." The woodcutter soon came with his axe, and the magician bade him cut down a laurel, a cedar, an olive, and a palm, and lop off all their branches close to the stem. Then he ordered him to carry down all the boughs to the sea-shore, and throw them one by one into the sea; and as each branch touched the water, the magician muttered an enchantment which made it grow longer and broader and deeper, till at last it turned into a beautiful ship big enough to carry five hundred men. Each kind of branch produced a different sort of vessel; so that at the end of the day Duke Astulf possessed a hundred ships of four different rigs, twenty-five of each. They were all stout vessels, fit to sail to the world's end, and were ready furnished with masts, sails, and rigging of the best quality; besides good anchors and strong cables, with a proper number of small boats, abundance of oars to use in case the winds should prove contrary, and everything else which could possibly be wanted on a voyage. Moreover, Astulf found no lack of captains, pilots, and crews; for he could get as many as he wanted from the islands of Malta, Corsica, and Sardinia; so that in a very few days his fleet was fully manned and ready to start upon its voyage.

Then the Duke embarked fifty thousand of his soldiers, five hundred in each ship; and he appointed Dieudonné to be their general. For he knew that the young Dane was a prudent and valiant captain, equally expert in warfare both by land and sea; as all his countrymen were in those olden times. The very day before they were ready

to put to sea, Prester John let loose the South Wind out of the sack in which Astulf had imprisoned him; and immediately the Wind went leaping and whistling over Africa, rejoicing in his newly-recovered liberty. Nothing could have been luckier for Duke Astulf's plans; for with this wind his fleet could sail quickly northward, and might reach the harbour of Marseilles in a very few days. So they weighed anchor at daybreak and sailed merrily away; and in the next chapter I will tell you what fortune they had.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE NOBLE FIGHT BETWEEN ROGER AND DIEUDONNÉ; AND HOW ROGER WAS SHIPWRECKED AND CAME TO A HERMIT'S ISLAND.

DIEUDONNÉ'S fleet sped swiftly over the sea before the southerly wind; and at the same time King Agramant's vessels, conveying the remnant of his shattered army, were slowly beating to windward in hopes of making the coast of Africa. Knowing that a mighty host was besieging Biserta, the Saracen king determined not to land there, but to make for some port a little to the eastward, where he might disembark his troops, and so lead them overland to the succour of his beleaguered city. His hard fortune, however, suffered him not to accomplish this prudent design, but led him to encounter the hostile fleet, in which Dieudonné was transporting his army of Nubians to France. Now Agramant had not heard any rumour of Duke Astulf's intention to send these reinforcements to the Emperor; neither would he have believed it, if any one had told him of it, since he knew that the Duke could not have brought any ships across the desert. So he deemed himself quite secure at sea, and sailed on his way without taking the trouble to make sure that his men kept careful watch. The young Dane, on the other hand, like a prudent admiral, kept a constant look-out; and one evening just after sunset his men signalled the Saracen ships ahead. Knowing that Charlemagne had no fleet at present, Dieudonné felt certain that these must be the enemy's vessels; so he bade his men prepare for action

and sail in all haste towards them. By this time it was pitch dark, so that the Nubians fell upon the Saracen vessels unawares; and having also the advantage of the wind, they crashed into the midst of them with such a shock that they sent several to the bottom at the first encounter. Then they got out their grappling-irons and chains, with which they lashed their own ships to those of the enemy; and immediately a fierce and terrible battle began in the darkness. Some cleared the Saracen decks with volleys of great stones from their catapults; others boarded them sword in hand; while the Nubian archers perched themselves in the rigging of their vessels, whence they rained down a storm of arrows on their bewildered foes. Others again brought caldrons of pitch and ropes besmeared with tar, which they lighted and threw into the enemy's ships; and by this means several were burnt to the water's edge. Assailed by so many terrors, the Saracens knew not how to defend themselves; and while they sought to escape one kind of death they rushed blindly to encounter another. Some threw themselves overboard to avoid the arrows and stones, and perished by drowning in the waters; others lowered boats, in which they tried to sail away; but the boats were all overladen, so that every one of them sank with all its crew. Others had a still more miserable death; for in the agony of drowning they would clutch at a burning spar, and thus they perished wretchedly half by water and half by fire. In short, Dieudonné and his Nubians gained the completest victory ever known, for they destroyed the whole of the enemy's fleet except seven ships which surrendered at discretion.

Only King Agramant escaped, taking with him the wise King Sobrin, his counsellor, and about a dozen of his ship's crew. At first he had scorned to flee; for the darkness hid from him the number of his assailants, and he would not believe that he had encountered a force superior to his own. But presently the whole scene was lit up by the flames from the burning ships, so that the night seemed turned to day; and then the Saracen King

perceived that his choice lay between flight and death. So he ordered a boat to be got ready, into which he lowered Gold Bridle and the most precious of his treasures; and as soon as these were on board, he called to Sobrin and a handful of sailors to accompany him. With them he descended into the boat; and steering a perilous course through the midst of the fleets, by great good luck he gained the open sea, and fled away in the direction of the African coast.

Meanwhile Dieudonné sailed on towards Provence, taking with him the seven ships that had surrendered. These were commanded by seven kings, who submitted themselves as prisoners to the young Paladin; but he said: "I am only the vassal of the Emperor Charlemagne, and henceforward you are his prisoners, not mine." So he bound them in chains on board his own ship, and carried them with all their people to Marseilles.

All this time Prince Roger was in sore perplexity, not knowing what he ought to do. For when Melissa in the likeness of Rodomont persuaded King Agramant to break the truce, the two champions, whose combat was thus interrupted, stood aside till they could know which army had begun the battle. The rest of that day and the next morning were spent by Roger in asking every one whom he met to tell him the origin of the fray; and all whom he asked agreed in declaring King Agramant to be in fault. Now, according to the strict letter of his agreement, Prince Roger, when convinced of his leader's guilt, ought to have gone over to the Emperor and professed himself his vassal. But he loved the King of Tunis in his heart, and could not bear to forsake him in his misfortune, thinking, "Men would certainly say that I took the first excuse for deserting my liege lord, when I perceived that the Emperor prevailed against him." Thus he was divided in spirit between his promise, which his love for Bradamante urged him to keep, and his loyal devotion to King Agramant. A day and a night he remained irresolute; but at length he decided that his first duty was towards his liege lord, and accordingly he returned to Arles, intending to rejoin

the Saracen army. But he arrived in the city only in time to see the sails of Agramant's fleet disappearing in the distance, while not a Saracen was to be seen about the place except the unburied corpses of those who had perished in the battle.

Finding himself thus left behind, Roger determined to take ship and follow his comrades to Africa; and for this purpose he rode down to Marseilles, where he arrived just an hour after Dieudonné's fleet had cast anchor in the harbour. The huge ships seemed to fill up the whole roadstead; and our Prince marvelled greatly at the sight of them, for he could not imagine whence so mighty an armament could have come. But his astonishment was increased tenfold, when he rode down to the shore, and saw the seven kings sitting in bonds upon the beach, with a troop of Nubian soldiers keeping guard over them. Near them were spread out all the spoils from their ships, which had just been brought on shore; and Dieudonné himself was close at hand, giving orders how everything should be arranged.

Now these seven kings were all known to Prince Roger, for they were neighbours and vassals of King Agramant, and were wont to frequent his Court. So the Prince, who loved them, could not bear to see them in such pitiable plight; and shouting: "Rescue! rescue!" he laid his lance in rest, and spurred Frontin against the Nubians who guarded them. Three he slew with the lance, and five more with his terrible Balisarda; after which the remaining soldiers fled in confusion, being unaccustomed to encounter a knight of Roger's prowess. But Dieudonné heard the uproar, and saw the slaughter which Roger wrought, though he knew not who it was that had come to rescue his prisoners. Nevertheless, seeing that his men were put to flight and stricken with terror, he closed his visor, and leaped upon his horse, and boldly laid his lance in rest for battle, as befitted a Paladin of France. Thereupon Roger ceased from pursuing after the Nubians, and went to encounter Dieudonné, whom he rightly judged to be their captain. And the gallant young Dane, seeing that his

antagonist's lance was broken, forbore to use any advantage against him; and throwing his own lance aside, he drew forth his mace to contend with him on equal terms.

Now when Roger perceived this act of courtesy, he said within himself: "Surely this must be one of those perfect warriors, who bear the title of Paladins of France." Wishing to be certainly informed in this matter, he entreated his adversary to tell him his name; and when he knew it, he said: "Truly I could not desire a nobler antagonist." Then Dieudonné made the same request to Prince Roger, and found him equally courteous in answering his inquiry; and when they knew each other's names, they challenged each other in due form, and straightway addressed themselves to battle.

Dieudonné was armed with the iron-spiked mace, which had brought him renown on many a hard-fought field; and with it he gave good proof that the blood of Ogier flowed in his veins. But Roger's weapon was the terrible sword Balisarda, which could smite through any helmet or cuirass, and which had no equal in all the world save only the thrice famous Durindana. So Dieudonné and his mace soon proved no match for Prince Roger and Balisarda; nevertheless our Courteous Prince was careful to do his adversary no hurt, because he knew him to be cousin by the mother's side to Bradamante. Therefore he never dealt him either thrust or cut, but smote him always with the flat of the sword, thinking that in this way he could conquer him without risk of shedding his blood. Yet so tremendous was his strength, that even thus he half stunned Dieudonné several times; so that his mace nearly fell from his hands, and Roger could easily have slain him if he had chosen. Now when this had happened three or four times, Dieudonné understood that his adversary meant to respect his life; and he thought: "Certainly I am no match for this knight in strength or skill, but at least I will show myself his equal in courtesy." So he lifted up his hand for a signal that the battle should be stayed, and said: "Sir Prince, let there be peace between us, seeing that the victory can in no wise be mine. For I see that

you forbear to slay me; wherefore I confess myself conquered alike by your valour and your generosity." "I also desire peace," answered Roger; "but it must be on condition that you release these seven kings, my friends, whom you hold captive, and suffer me to take them back to their own land." "Of a truth," replied the Dane, "I held them as prisoners of the Emperor; since I, who took them captive, am his vassal. But now I am overcome by you in fair and honourable combat; wherefore my right to hold them in bondage has passed to you, and they are become your prisoners to do with as you will." So Prince Roger struck off the chains from the hands of the seven kings; and Dieudonné, hearing that he wished to return with them to Africa, offered to give him one of his ships for the passage.

Then these noble warriors made a solemn covenant of friendship, vowing that they would be true allies thenceforward; after which they separated, and Dieudonné conveyed his spoils and the rest of his prisoners to Paris, whither the Emperor Charlemagne had returned in peace.

But Roger embarked, together with the seven kings, on board the ship which the Paladin had given him, and sailed southward away for Africa. For two days they sped merrily before a fair wind, which filled their sails, and gave promise of a quick and prosperous voyage. But on the third day the wind began to shift about, and struck them in squalls now to starboard, now to larboard, and now right ahead; so that their ship was caught in a high chopping sea, and the helmsman strove in vain to keep her in her proper course. While they were thus buffeted about, night came on and bewildered the crew still more; their mainmast was carried away by the gale: the helmsman was washed overboard, and the ship swung round into the trough of the sea. Then the sailors lost heart, and shrieked aloud for terror, making such a noise that the captain's word of command could no longer be heard. And still the tempest grew fiercer, and every wave threatened to send the vessel to the bottom; indeed, if she had not been one of Duke Astulf's magic ships, she must

certainly have foundered long ago. At length morning broke; and behold! straight before them rose the cliffs of a rocky island, towards which the wind was driving them at a fearful speed. Vainly did they strive to steer clear of it; for their ship had got quite out of hand and refused to answer to her helm. Thrice did the sailors put their whole strength to the tiller, but all their efforts were useless, and at the third attempt their rudder was broken and carried away by the waves. Then they gave themselves up for lost, and rushed frantically about the decks; all discipline, all order, was lost, and every one thought only how he might have the best chance of saving his own life. At this moment two or three of them lowered the boat, and immediately there was a rush to the ship's side; the seven kings, the captain, and all the crew crowded together into this one pinnace, and tried to row her away from the cliffs, which were now within half a mile of them. Only Prince Roger kept his head, and remained calmly on the deck of the ship; and it was well for him that he did so. For in two or three minutes the overladen pinnace was swamped, and every soul on board of her perished.

Thus Roger alone of all the company remained alive; and he too seemed doomed to a speedy death, since the ship must soon be dashed upon the rocks. Perceiving this, he thought his only chance of life lay in swimming to shore; so he stripped off his armour and all his clothes, and laid them on the deck of the vessel. Also he brought up his good horse Frontin from below, that he too might have a chance to save himself by swimming, and then plunged headlong into the waves and struck out vigorously for shore. But Frontin refused to follow him, and stood quietly looking at him from the deck, though his master called out to him with his voice, which the gallant steed had never disobeyed before. And now a strange thing came to pass, of which Frontin's instinct had perhaps given him some foreboding: the wind suddenly veered back to the north and began to abate in violence; and the ship, which a skilful captain and crew could not save from deadly peril, drifted safely and quickly along now that there

was nobody to steer or manage it. With wondering eyes Roger saw what had happened, and wished he had waited a little longer before jumping overboard. But his regrets came too late, since he could not hope to overtake the vessel; so he swam bravely on towards the island, while his horse and armour were borne away from him over the waters.

He had terribly hard work to keep his head above the waves, which still ran mountains high; and in spite of his fine swimming he quite expected to sink before he could get to land. With the fear of death before his eyes his conscience began to trouble him, and he saw clearly that he had committed a grievous fault in not joining himself to the Emperor's army after King Agramant had broken the truce. Misled by his loyalty to the King of Tunis, he had thought that his duty to him should outweigh his solemn promise in the lists; but now he perceived his error, and bitterly repented that he had broken his faith with the Emperor. His love for Bradamante, too, added to the bitterness of his repentance; for he considered that, if he had kept his promise, he might now be sojourning beside her in Paris, and the day for their marriage might be fixed. So he vowed that, if he escaped this time from the waves, he would make atonement for his former fault by going as soon as possible to France, and acknowledging himself the vassal of Charlemagne. Then with a better heart he strove against the sea, till at last he managed to reach the rocky island, and lay half dead with fatigue upon the beach.

He had not lain there many minutes before he was accosted by a venerable hermit, who lived quite alone on this desolate island. This good old man had been taking a walk on the cliffs, as it was his habit to do every morning; and seeing Roger struggling in the water below, he had hastened down to offer him such help as he could. Finding him safely got to shore, he saluted him courteously,—for by his aspect he perceived him to be of noble birth,—and took him to his cell among the rocks, where he gave him clothes to wear, and set food and drink before him.

ROGER SAVED FROM THE SEA.—P. 276.

Moreover, he offered him a share of his cell and of all that he possessed, till such time as he should be able to depart; and the Prince accepted his offer gladly, and gave him many thanks for his kindness.

So Roger dwelt in the hermit's cell; and there we must leave him for the present, knowing that he is in good company. For there are several other friends of ours who claim their share of our attention; and in particular it is time for us to follow the wanderings of the peerless Count Roland.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ROLAND AND RODOMONT TUMBLED INTO A RIVER; AND OTHER MAD DOINGS OF THE COUNT.

We have seen nothing of Count Roland since the unlucky day when his frenzy came upon him in the shepherd's valley; when he cast aside armour and clothing, and brandishing a young pine-tree for a club, rushed forth a raving madman from the place where he had found proof of Angelica's fickleness. Thenceforward he hid himself in solitary places, sometimes lying for weeks together in a cave among the mountains, or making his lair in the wild recesses of some pathless forest. Thus he led the life of a wild beast, and his aspect was changed so that his dearest friend could hardly have recognised him; his hair fell down in tangled masses over his naked back, his nails grew long like claws, and his skin became hard and discoloured from constant exposure. He always carried his pine-tree in his hand, and woe to the unhappy huntsman or peasant who chanced to cross his path! For in his madness he attacked every one whom he met, and one stroke from his club dashed out the brains from the hardest skull. Often, too, like Ajax the Greek of old, he would fall upon flocks and herds and slaughter them by hundreds at a time, imagining himself to be destroying the armies of his enemies; and many a time he fought with the fierce beasts of the forest, strangling the terrible wild boar in his hands, or pursuing after a whole pack of frightened wolves, and destroying them with his wooden club. Moreover, he was so fleet of foot that he could outrun a full-grown stag; wherefore he never wanted

for food, but whenever he felt hungry he would go forth into the forest and kill the first animal he happened to see.

Many months passed by, and still his madness abated not; but he, the foremost knight in all the world, lived more wretchedly than a brute beast, while his comrades, who delighted to honour him as their chief, were covering themselves with glory in the defence of their country against the Saracens. Yet, strangely enough, without knowing what he did, he once came to blows with the most terrible warrior in all the Pagan army; and this was how it happened.

You remember, no doubt, how King Rodomont turned his back on his former allies, after Princess Doralis had refused to marry him; and how he rode away in great wrath, renouncing his allegiance to King Agramant, and vowing that from that day forward he would be the enemy alike of Christian and Saracen. He rode southward through France for several days, till he came to a deep and rapid river which cut across the road so that whoever wished to pursue his journey must be ferried over the stream in a boat. On the opposite bank were the ruins of an old castle, built upon a grassy knoll not twenty yards from the water's edge; and here the King of Algeria resolved to take up his quarters for a season. For as soon as he saw the place, he thought of a plan for avenging himself upon all the world, and determined to lose no time in carrying it out.

First he pressed a number of masons into his service, and set them to repair the crumbling walls, making them work day and night till the old fortress was as strong as it had ever been. Next he threw a narrow bridge over the stream, consisting of three planks laid side by side and pegged firmly together; and this bridge, which was just wide enough for a single horseman to gallop over, was furnished with neither rail nor rope, but was quite open at both sides, so that a single false step would plunge horse and rider into the stream. When his bridge was finished, Rodomont drove away the ferryman and broke his boat to pieces, so that no one could pass over the stream except by these narrow planks; and this passage he resolved to dispute against all comers. He called this place "The Bridge

Perilous," because here he intended to wreak his vengeance on any knight who passed by, no matter whether he had offended him or not; for his disappointment had enraged him against all the world. And he vowed that he would disarm all the knights whom he overcame, and hang up their harness as a trophy on the battlements of his fortress: if the vanquished one were a Saracen he might go free after being stripped of his armour; but all Christians should be kept in the castle dungeons, till he could send them prisoners to his own kingdom.

This was the vow which Rodomont made, and he was not long in proving that he meant what he said. Before he had been a week in the place, he had encountered a score of knights, all of whom he had overthrown and stripped of their harness. One of the first to suffer this outrage was Sacripant, King of Circassia, who had followed after the Algerian in the hope of wresting Frontin out of his possession. Instead of which he gained nothing but defeat, and lost his own horse and his armour to boot; for Rodomont toppled him over into the stream, and robbed him of everything that he possessed except the tunic under his coat of mail. However, as Sacripant was a Pagan, Rodomont would not shut him up in prison, but left him free to make his way back, unarmed and on foot, as best he might.

Soon after this it chanced that the mad Count Roland came to the Bridge Perilous, leaping and shouting and brandishing his club, so that the people on the road scattered in all directions from before him. Only Rodomont, who was standing fully armed at the head of his bridge, kept his ground, and shouted to the madman, not knowing who he was: "Avaunt, villain, and dare not to tread this bridge, which is made for lords and knights to pass over if they can." But Roland gave him no answer save a fierce cry as he leaped upon the planks; wherefore Rodomont exclaimed: "I must give this crazy peasant a lesson;" and went on foot to throw him off the bridge, never dreaming that he would be able to resist him. In great wrath he seized Roland round the waist, and thought to hurl him down at the first trial; but the mad Count stood firm as a

rock, and Rodomont could not so much as shake him in his footing. Again and again he wrestled with him, putting forward now his right foot and now his left, and throwing his arms at one time round the waist, at another round the hips, and sometimes even over the neck of his antagonist. But all his efforts were in vain, for Roland stood upright and unmoved, laughing wildly at each useless tussle; and Rodomont looked like a thick-witted bear which has tumbled out of a tree, and tries to tear the great trunk out of the earth in stupid revenge for his fall. At last the madman lost patience, and in his turn clutched Rodomont round the middle; then with a crazy peal of laughter he swayed violently to one side, lost his balance, and with the gigantic Algerian in his arms fell over the side of the bridge. Down to the bottom of the river they fell with a tremendous splash, while the water flew up in spray, and the very banks trembled as though an earthquake had shaken them. The water soon parted them one from the other, and Roland, who was naked, swam like a fish, so that he picked up his club in mid-stream and got safe to the opposite shore. Then he went madly on his course as before; while Rodomont, who was hindered by the weight of his armour, was still struggling in the water, and swimming slowly and painfully across the current.

It was many a long day before the terrible Algerian met with another defeat; and before that happened he had overthrown above a hundred and fifty knights, of whom the greater part were Christians. All these he shut up in his dungeons, according to his vow, till he got an opportunity of sending them by ship to Algiers. The very day after his adventure with Roland, the noble Sansonet fell into his clutches; and he was followed by two knights of still greater renown. For Oliver and Brandimart, the faithful friends of Roland, started in search of the Count, hoping to find means of healing his madness, if only they could discover him. With them went the lovely Lady Lilias, Sir Brandimart's gentle wife, who always shared her husband's perils and adventures; but though they all three set out together, they soon resolved to separate, that they might have more

chance of falling in with the Count. So Sir Oliver journeyed southward, and came straight to the Bridge Perilous, where Rodomont overthrew him and shut him up in the same dungeon with Sansonet. Meanwhile Sir Brandimart and his lady searched through the eastern forests of France, but at length they also took the southern road, and appeared before King Rodomont's fortress. There the valiant Sir Brandimart was unhorsed, as Oliver had been before him, not through any fault of his own, but because his charger feared to gallop over the narrow plank; whereupon the King of Algiers shut him up in prison with his comrades, and hung up his armour for a trophy on the castle battlements. And a few days afterwards he made ready one of his own ships, in which he forced his unlucky captives to embark, and bade the captain convey them in chains to Algiers.

So Brandimart, Oliver, and Sansonet were carried away captive with many others out of France; but the sweet Lady Lilias remained at liberty, and wandered to and fro about the country seeking a champion to deliver and avenge her husband. Several knights undertook the enterprise, for Sir Brandimart and his lady were beloved by all the world; but the terrible Rodomont vanquished them all in turn, and added them to his tale of prisoners. At last Lilias had the good fortune to encounter Bradamante on her journey from Montalbano to Arles; and then the great King of Algiers sustained his second defeat. I told you briefly a few chapters back that Bradamante conquered him and won Frontin out of his possession, but then I had no time to say much about their battle, and perhaps you may like to hear something more about it. Our gallant damsel, you remember, was mounted on her cousin Astulf's horse Rabican, and carried his wonderful lance of gold in her hand. Thus equipped, and guided by her friend the Lady Lilias, she drew near to the Bridge Perilous, which took her only a little out of her road. When he saw her approaching, Rodomont supposed her to be a man, and shouted: "Hold, Sir Knight; no one crosses over this bridge save after fighting with me for the passage." And

then he went on to tell her the conditions of the battle, saying that if she were vanquished she must deliver up her horse and armour, and yield herself a prisoner into his hands. But Bradamante answered him: "I will fight with you on these terms, Sir King; only you too must accept certain conditions, in case I overthrow you. In that case you must yield me your charger Frontin, which properly belongs to a friend of mine; also you must set at liberty all your prisoners, and restore to them their armour, which I see hanging from the walls of your fortress."

King Rodomont accepted her terms with a scornful laugh, thinking it impossible that she could prevail against him; and as soon as they had come to this agreement they laid their lances in rest, and met together in the very middle of the bridge. Now all the former champions had been easily overthrown, because their horses were scared at having to gallop over these narrow planks, while Rodomont had trained Frontin to tread them without fear, as though he were being ridden to a tournament in the lists. But Rabican was so light of foot that he could have galloped safely along the thinnest rail, so Bradamante suffered no disadvantage on the score of her horse. Thus she was free to bring her wonderful lance into play, and its virtue stood her in good stead now as before; for she merely touched the rim of Rodomont's shield with its point, when the gigantic Saracen fell sideways off his horse and toppled over into the rushing stream, out of which he had great difficulty in swimming to land. Mortified at his unexpected defeat, he begged his conqueror to tell him her name, and he was doubly vexed when he learnt that a woman had overthrown him; nevertheless he was bound to perform the conditions of their fight, so he delivered Frontin and all the armour into the hands of Bradamante. Then he said: "Noble lady, I cannot release you the prisoners at present, because I have already sent them into Africa, but I promise on my honour as a knight to send a messenger after them, with authority to deliver them out of prison." So Bradamante took Frontin to Arles, as you know, and Rodomont made haste to despatch his messenger to Algiers, for bad and

cruel as he was, he was never false to his word. However, the messenger's errand proved needless, because all the knights had been set at liberty long before he arrived, as we shall see in the next chapter. And this is the last that you will hear of King Rodomont till the very end of the book, where I shall have something to tell you about the manner of his death.

Now we must follow Count Roland, and see whither his frenzy led him. You would think me as crazy as the Count himself if I tried to tell you all his mad deeds, but I will choose just a few of them, to show you how terrible was his affliction to himself and everybody else, and to give you some idea of his wanderings.

From the Bridge Perilous he went to the Pyrenees, and rushed up one of the passes that led over the mountains into Spain. The path was cut in the side of a hill, with a precipice on one side, and the steep slope of the mountain on the other; and in this dangerous place the mad Count met a couple of peasant lads driving an ass laden with wood before them. Perceiving that Roland was crazy, the silly fellows thought it good fun to gibe at him, crying, "Ha! Mr. Madman, where have you left your wits?" But they had better have held their foolish tongues, for Roland lifted up his foot and caught their ass a tremendous kick in the stomach, which sent the poor beast flying fifty yards up in the air. When they saw how strong the madman was, the lads repented of their folly, and did their best to avoid his vengeance. One of them let himself tumble over the precipice, and he was the luckier of the two, for he had the good fortune to fall into a thicket of brambles, and escaped with a severe scratching; the other began scrambling up the mountain side, thinking that his best chance of safety, but the angry Count caught him by the feet and tore his legs asunder, ripping his body in twain as a falconer rips up a fowl to feed his hawk on the entrails.

Thence the madman sped onwards through Spain, giving terrible proof of his strength and fury wherever he went. When he felt hungry he would rush into the nearest village and take whatever he wanted by force, scattering the inha-

bitants before him and killing any that opposed him. And the worst of it was that, while he wrought all this havoc, he fancied himself to be doing good and valiant service; for his madness made him take wrong for right.

One day near Tarragon he fell in with a knight and his lady riding pleasantly along together. Imagining them to be a couple of madmen whom he ought to attack, he began a furious assault upon them: first he knocked the knight over with his club, and laid him stunned and bleeding on the ground; then he tore the lady from her saddle, and leaping upon her palfrey scampered wildly away across the fields. He galloped so furiously that the palfrey's strength began to fail; but still he urged it on with kicks and blows, allowing it not a moment to take breath. And when it could carry him no farther, he got off its back and drove it before him, forcing it to gallop when it was hardly able to crawl. At last the poor overworked creature fell down and died; whereupon the mad Count flung its carcass over his shoulders, and went on leaping and yelling as before.

Presently he came to the bank of a river, where he was forced to drop his burden. He swam easily enough with his great club in one hand to the other side, where he met a shepherd riding on a horse, which he was taking down to drink at the stream. "Hola!" cried Roland; "good fellow, I would fain have that horse of yours, and will give you my own in exchange. He is a first-rate beast, as you may see for yourself if you choose, since he is lying down on the opposite bank; I have no fault to find with him, except that he is dead. So dismount and let me get into your saddle, for that is my good pleasure." The shepherd only laughed at this proposed bargain; whereupon the mad Count flew into a rage, and hit him over the head with his club, smashing his skull to atoms. Then he leaped into the saddle and scoured the country round, committing havoc wherever he went.

At last he came to Gibraltar, where he saw a pleasure-boat just putting out to sea, and cried: "Stop! stop! I want to make one of your company." But the people in the boat had no mind to take him in, so they held on their

course, while Roland forced his horse into the water, intending to pursue them. Soon he forgot all about the boat, and thought only of riding to the African shore; for he was so mad that he hardly knew whether he was in the sea or on dry land. His horse could hardly keep his head above water; but whenever he gasped for breath, Roland dealt him a blow with his club, and made him swim on towards the middle of the Straits. At last the poor beast sank to the bottom; nevertheless the Count was not discouraged, but swam boldly on towards Africa. Luckily the sea was as smooth as glass, and he was the finest swimmer ever known, so that, even though he was weighted by his club, there was no fear of his perishing in the water. And in this fashion he crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and landed safely on the shore of Tangier in Africa.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ROLAND CAME TO BISERTA, AND GOT BACK HIS WITS.

DUKE ASTULF was walking one day upon the shore near Biserta when he saw a Saracen ship run aground on the sands close by his encampment. Immediately he summoned a detachment of his soldiers, who boarded the vessel and took her captain and crew prisoners. But what was Astulf's astonishment when he found Brandimart, Oliver, Sansonet, and a number of other Christian knights sitting together in the hold, loaded with chains, and having their feet made fast in fetters of iron! In fact, this ship, which had so fortunately run aground near Biserta, was the one in which Rodomont had intended his captives to be taken to Algiers, but stress of weather had forced the captain out of his course, and drove him upon the beach where the Nubian army was bivouacking. Straightway our Englishman struck off the fetters and chains from the Christian knights and put them on the ship's crew; and when he had released his gallant comrades he asked them how they had fallen into this plight. So they told him of Rodomont and his Bridge Perilous, and how one after the other they were all toppled off the planks into the river; at which Astulf could not refrain from laughing, and said: "By my faith, my friends, you are come hither in the very nick of time; if you had got yourselves overthrown on purpose, you could not have contrived things better. Here am I battering away at Biserta with a great army of Nubians under my orders, and the only thing that I wanted was a company of

valiant knights, able to lead my men in battle. So the best thing you can do is to stay here till we have taken the city, for that will make Agramant howl as if his best tooth were pulled out."

With these and other jests the Duke led them to his own tent, where he bade his servants spread a good dinner for them to eat. "For you must be terribly hungry," he said, "after living so long on prisoners' fare. Poor fellows! with nothing but bread and water to sustain you all these weeks! To be sure, you might have caught a few fish to vary your diet while you were swimming out of the river; but I suppose you never thought of that." "Truly," answered Sir Oliver, "I for one shall be glad enough to sit at a Christian table once more. But tell me, my Astulf, where hast thou been all these many months? It is now nigh upon two years since we met, and right glad am I to see thee again; but I long to hear of thy adventures." "No talking on empty stomachs," replied the Duke; "but with a beefsteak to keep up my strength, and a jorum of wine to oil my throat, I will talk till midnight if you care to listen." "Wherever thou hast been," said Sir Brandimart, "that plaguy good-humour of thine is as frolicsome as ever." "Ay, ay," answered Astulf; "but it took a good rest for several weeks, while I lived the life of a vegetable out in the Fortunate Islands. I can tell you it's no good for a myrtle-bush to try to be jovial. But all that shall form part of my tale after dinner; now let us sit down to the victuals."

Now while this company of friends were still eating and drinking, a servant entered the tent, saying that a lady was waiting outside who desired to speak with Sir Brandimart. Imagine the gallant Paladin's joy when he went out and found the arms of his sweet wife Lilias thrown round his neck! She it was indeed; and by her presence here you may know how dearly this gentle lady loved her husband. For hearing that he had been sent captive into Africa she straightway resolved to follow him thither and be present at his promised release, counting all perils and hardships of the voyage as nothing in comparison with the pleasure of

meeting him again. So with only one trusty old henchman, Sir Brandimart's favourite servant, to bear her company, she chartered a ship at Marseilles, and went by sea to the port of Algiers. There she learned that the vessel with Rodomont's captives had never arrived; at which she was overwhelmed with despair, fearing that her lord must have been cast away upon the voyage. Hardly daring to hope, she bought horses for herself and her servant, and rode all the way to Biserta in Tunis, where she heard the glad news that Sir Brandimart had arrived safe and sound among his friends. I know not which of the two felt the greater joy at this happy meeting; again and again they embraced each other, while tears of delight fell fast from the eyes of Lilias, and her loving husband could not utter a word for pleasure. But at length he took her by the hand and led her within the tent, where she was welcomed with great joy and honour by Duke Astulf and all his comrades.

Their greetings were scarcely finished, when a great uproar was heard among the soldiers, and Astulf's servant rushed into the tent with trembling limbs and a scared countenance, crying out that they were all undone, for a naked madman with a great club in his hand had assaulted the camp, and no one could stand against him. Hearing this, the Paladins rose up from their seats, and girt on their swords, and went forth to quell the tumult. Guided by the shrieks of the terrified Nubians, they soon came in sight of the madman, whom they found leaping among the flying crowd and felling a soldier to the ground at each stroke of his massive club; already he had slain above a hundred, and nobody dared attempt to restrain him. Now when Astulf beheld the madman, he knew at once who he was by the token of which Virgil had told him, and cried to his comrades: "It is Count Roland himself;" but at first they would hardly believe his words. Fancy how changed the peerless Count must have been, when Brandimart and Oliver, his chosen friends, failed to recognise him! During many years these two had been constantly at his side, for Roland loved them better than any other men in the world; yet now they declared that Duke Astulf

must be mistaken, since this furious lunatic bore no resemblance whatever to their friend! At last, however, the Duke convinced them by telling them of the token which he had received; and then the four Paladins took speedy counsel together how they might take the Count and restore him to his senses.

With this intent they surrounded him and advanced on all sides to lay hands on him; but the madman had no mind to be captured, and lifting up his pine-tree in both hands, he aimed a blow at Sir Oliver's head. Oliver raised his shield to protect himself, and lucky it proved for him that his armour was of well-tempered steel; otherwise he must have been killed on the spot. Even as it was, so tremendous was the stroke, that it shivered his shield to atoms, and made a great dint in the top of his helmet. Seeing this, Sansonet drew his sword, and with a mighty cut lopped off a yard from the end of Roland's club, making it well-nigh harmless for the future. Next the mad Count rushed against Duke Astulf and knocked him head over heels, intending to escape over his body; but Brandimart had now caught him round the loins, and held him with so firm a grip, that Roland could not shake him off. At the same moment Oliver advanced to seize him by the shoulders; but he clenched his fist and dealt the Paladin a blow upon the visor of his helmet which laid him stunned upon the ground. Astulf and Sansonet, however, were upon him in a moment; the one took hold of him round the neck, while the other seized his legs from behind and strove to throw him; but all their efforts were in vain. For, like a wild bull overtaken by the hounds, which rushes over the plain, and carries along with him the dogs whose teeth are fastened in his flanks and ears;—the dogs cannot hinder him in his course, neither can he shake himself free from their teeth;—even so did Count Roland pursue his career, and carry along with him the three Paladins who clung to his limbs.

At this moment Sir Oliver rose up from the ground, where the blow of Roland's fist had laid him prostrate; and perceiving that the efforts of his comrades were unavailing

against Roland's marvellous strength, he thought of a better plan for overthrowing the Count. He procured a quantity of ropes, in which he made slip-knots as many as he needed; these he cast, some about the legs, others over the arms of Roland, who was too much occupied with the other three Paladins to prevent Oliver from slipping them over his limbs. Then Sir Oliver called up a number of soldiers, and told them off in companies of six, giving each company the end of one of the ropes to hold. In this way as Roland rushed forward, the cords were tightened round his limbs, so that he soon fell helpless to the ground like a buffalo taken in the lasso. As soon as he was down, the four Paladins rushed upon him, and bound him still more tightly, both hand and foot; in vain he writhed and kicked, and strove to free himself; they had got him now in their power, and he could not escape from their bonds.

"Alas!" exclaimed the faithful Brandimart, with tears in his eyes at witnessing his friend's condition; "alas! there is small profit in having captured him, if we know not how to heal his madness." But Duke Astulf smiled knowingly and answered: "Leave that to me, my Brandimart: I have his lost wits here safe in a bottle, and I promise you they shall soon be back in his brain." Then he ordered six of his soldiers to take up the Count and carry him to the sea-shore, while he himself went to his tent, and fetched out the precious bottle of green glass, in which he had brought down his lost wits from the moon. The soldiers did as they were bid, and laid Roland down at the water's edge; whereupon Astulf took him and dipped him seven times beneath the waves, till the dust and mud were all washed from off his face and limbs. Next he gathered certain herbs, and kneaded them into a plaster, which he spread over the mad Count's mouth, so that he might only be able to breathe through his nose. Lastly, when all these preparations were finished, the Duke drew out the cork from the bottle, which he thrust beneath Roland's nostrils; and in a single breath the Count drew up all his wits into his brain, so that his wisdom returned to him greater than it had been before his frenzy.

Like one who starts out of a troubled sleep, in which he has been haunted by monstrous shapes of things that never were, and still marvels, even in his waking moments, at the horrible forms that perplexed his dream; so did Roland remain stupefied and amazed after that his senses were given back to him. He turned his eyes upon Brandimart and Oliver and Duke Astulf, and knew them all; yet he spoke not for a while, but silently wondered how he had fallen into so strange a plight. "Loose me," he said at length, in his old tone of kindly command; and when they saw that he was indeed grown sane again, the four Paladins hastened to obey him. So they loosed him from his bonds, and Astulf brought him clothes to cover himself withal; after which they all returned with joy and thankfulness to the camp.

Thus was the most perfect knight in all the world restored to his senses, to stand forth once more as the chief bulwark of Christendom against its enemies. Moreover, his ardent love for the fickle Angelica had departed from him together with his frenzy; so that his happiness was never greatly troubled from that day forward; and no man could find a reproach to utter against his wisdom.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE PALADINS TOOK THE GREAT CITY OF BISERTA.

WITH Count Roland to lead them on, the Paladins were marvellously cheered in spirit, and doubted not but that they would soon succeed in taking Biserta by assault. And the Count willingly joined in their enterprise, of which he highly approved, thinking this the surest and quickest way of breaking King Agramant's power. Astulf immediately begged him to take command of the expedition, knowing him to be the most skilful general alive; but the peerless Count generously answered: "No; for this is your undertaking, Sir Duke. You have had all the trouble of collecting this army and leading it hither across the desert; wherefore it is right that you should still be chief captain, that the honour of the enterprise may be wholly yours. I will joyfully serve beneath your banner, and help you both with sword and counsel to the uttermost of my power; but I may not set myself above you in this matter."

So it was settled that Duke Astulf should still hold the chief command; nevertheless he purposed to do nothing without the consent and advice of Roland. Then the whole company returned to the Duke's tent, where they finished their dinner in peace. But when they had eaten their fill, they called upon Astulf to give them an account of his adventures; and accordingly he related all the wonderful things that had happened to him in the last two years, mentioning everything in its order, from the time when he had quitted his home in England down to his leading the Nubian army across the sands. Many times in the course

of his narrative did the Paladins open their eyes wide with astonishment, especially when he told them how Alcina had transformed him into a myrtle-bush, and how he had travelled by way of the Earthly Paradise to the Moon: they were greatly diverted also with the history of the man-slaying women, the truth of which Sansonet, who had borne his share in that adventure, was able to attest. And when the jovial Duke had finished speaking, Sir Brandimart turned to him and said: "Truly you are a fortunate man, my Astulf: for you have done and suffered wonderful things, such as never befell any man before. Heartily do I rejoice that you are come safe out of all your perils to gladden us again with your countenance; but most of all we ought to be thankful to you for having discovered the lost wits of our noble Count, and for the care which you have taken in restoring them to him."

It was now near midnight, for Astulf's adventures had taken a long time in the telling; so the company rose up from their seats, and prepared to take their rest for the night. The Duke had ordered pavilions to be pitched close to his own for Count Roland and his fellow Paladins, and had also provided a tent apiece for all the other knights whom he had delivered out of Rodomont's ship. So they gat them every man to his tent, and lay down to enjoy their well-earned sleep.

But in the morning the chiefs assembled again in Duke Astulf's pavilion, and took counsel together how they might best carry on the siege. By the advice of Count Roland it was resolved to make an assault on the city without delay; "for," said the Count, "we shall never get together a stronger force than this which is ours to-day, while every hour that we waste in idleness gives the enemy time to strengthen his defences." This counsel was heartily approved by all the Paladins; for they judged it prudent and good, and, besides, they were always glad of an occasion to do some fighting. Accordingly Astulf summoned his heralds, and bade them proclaim his will aloud throughout the camp, commanding every soldier to look well to his arms and accoutrements, that all might be ready to

join in the general assault which would be delivered in three days' time.

Now the city of Biserta was built in the form of a square, with two sides resting on the sea, and the other two fronting the Nubian encampment, which was pitched in a semicircle, stretching from shore to shore. The landward sides of the town were defended by a moat, which was both wide and deep; but luckily the water that should have filled it was just now nearly dried up, because there had been a scarcity of rain in the country, while there were no means of pumping up a supply from the sea. On the inner edge of this moat was built an ancient wall, very high and strong, with battlements and embrasures and square towers rising at intervals along its length. These were all the fortifications that the city possessed; for its Saracen commanders had not had time to construct an inner line of defence.

Now the Paladins purposed to assail the place both by sea and land, having abundance of troops to carry out their double design; they had also plenty of ships, since Astulf's magician had built him a second fleet equal to that in which Dieudonné had sailed to France. The command of these ships was given to Sansonet, since Astulf knew him to be well skilled in naval warfare; but there were yet two days to pass before they attempted the assault, which they had no mind to waste in idleness. Therefore, while Sansonet practised his men on board ship, and the greater part of the army were occupied in furbishing up their weapons, Duke Astulf selected twenty thousand men, whom he set to the task of filling up the moat beneath the walls. First they drained away all the water that remained in it into the sea; and this was not difficult, because the shore sloped rapidly down at both ends of the wall: moreover they accomplished this work by night, when the enemy could do but little to hinder them. It proved a much harder task to fill up the ditch with earth; for this must needs be done in broad daylight, and the Saracens, now fully aware of their design, poured a continual shower of missiles upon them from the walls. Some hundreds were slain and nearly two thousand wounded in this manner; nevertheless, as the labourers

were so many, the work went on apace, so that by the evening of the second day after Astulf's proclamation the moat was filled up level with the ground, and everything was in readiness for the assault.

Then the detachment that had performed this work were dismissed and allowed to rest; but of the others not a man closed his eyes that night, for all was bustle and stir of preparation. Sansonet stood out a little to sea, and made ready his ships for action; thirty thousand men were told off to work the catapults and battering-rams under the command of a Nubian captain; and all the rest were divided into four columns, each led by one of the Paladins, which were to assault the walls in four different places at once. An hour before daybreak every man was at his post, and Duke Astulf bade the trumpets sound for battle.

The Saracens were commanded by King Agramant's lieutenants, Count Branzard and Sir Bucifar, joined with whom was the commandant of the town, whose name was Sir Fulvus. These three were all brave warriors and prudent leaders, who had kept their men well on the alert and made great preparation for resisting the expected attack. So when the Christians came beneath the walls, they found them manned by all the enemy's troops, so that they profited little by beginning their enterprise in the dark. In this last hour of the night, and while the gray dawn was yet faint in the east, the Nubians lost many thousands of their men; for the Saracens cast down javelins and spears, heavy logs of wood, great masses of stone, and numberless other missiles upon them. Their archers also shot forth clouds of arrows; and they were provided with abundance of Greek fire, which greatly discomfited their assailants.

Nevertheless the Nubians persevered bravely, cheered on by the gallant Paladins their leaders; and when at length the sun rose, they began to have the advantage over their enemies. For then Sansonet sailed up with all his fleet, and attacked the city on the sides which faced the sea; and this forced Count Branzard to draw off a number of his men from the walls in order to defend the quays. Also the men who worked the catapults could now see to take aim

at the Saracens on the battlements, and discharged huge masses of rock among them; while the great battering-rams thundered against the walls till they quivered to the very foundations.

Perceiving that the enemy resisted more faintly, the Paladins pressed the attack with double vigour; they dragged forward great wooden towers on wheels, made of an equal height with the battlements, so that the men in them met the garrison on equal terms; and in every way they encouraged their soldiers to deeds of valour. Also they had provided a number of elephants, which carried other wooden towers on their backs; and in these, which rose high above the level of the walls, were stationed companies of archers, who rained down their arrows on the heads of the Saracens. At the same time some of the Nubians attacked the city gates, and others tried to mount the walls on scaling-ladders; but as yet they could not force an entrance.

At last Brandimart seized a ladder, and with his own hands succeeded in laying it against the wall. Sword in hand he dashed up its steps and leaped upon the wall, calling on his men to follow him, but looking only to the foe in front, whom he thrust down with his arm or hacked in pieces with his sword, showing them to their sorrow what it was to oppose a Paladin of France. Animated by their chief's example, the Nubians pressed on behind him; but unluckily they were too eager to mount the wall, and crowded up the ladder in such numbers that it broke beneath their weight, and all who were upon it fell to the ground. Thus Sir Brandimart was left alone upon the battlements to face the whole army of the Pagans; nevertheless that gallant warrior lost not heart, nor thought for a moment of drawing back. Many voices entreated him to return, but he thought only of going forward; and having overthrown all the Saracens within his reach, he leaped down after them from the wall, and thus dauntlessly entered the city of his foes.

Very soon the other Paladins learnt that Brandimart was alone in Biserta; whereupon, being alarmed for his safety,

they redoubled their efforts to follow him, and Roland especially could ill brook a moment's delay in going to the succour of his friend. And such valour as these gallant knights displayed could not long fail of its effect. Even as a tempest-tossed vessel strains and strains in the trough of the sea, but her timbers still hold tightly together, till at length some great billow forces a narrow leak, which widens with each succeeding wave, and the whole sea rushes in at last; —even so fared it now with the mighty city of Biserta. Where Brandimart had first forced an entrance alone, Roland, Oliver, and Astulf were quick to follow; and after them rushed in the whole army of Nubians, athirst for the plunder of the richest city in all the realms of Africa. At the same moment Sansonet succeeded in repulsing the Saracens who were defending the quays, and his men dashed forth from their ships to assist their comrades in sacking the town.

Then ensued such a scene of horror as passes the power of man to describe; the men were put to the sword, till the streets ran red with blood; the women and children were led into captivity; houses were fired in every quarter, so that the sky was blackened with smoke, and the earth aglow with lurid flame. The noble Paladins did their best to save the beautiful city and its unhappy people; but even they could not control the savage spirit of the Nubians. Their fierce African blood was up, lusting for slaughter and destruction; and before another day was spent nothing but a mass of smoking ruins was left where the mighty town of Biserta had stood.

CHAPTER VI.

BATTLE OF THE SIX CHAMPIONS; AND HOW ROLAND GOT BACK HIS HORSE AND ARMOUR.

WHEN King Agramant fled before the ships of Dieudonné the Paladin, he escaped, if you remember, in a small pinnace, taking with him Gold Bridle and the most precious of his treasures, and being accompanied by the wise King Sobrin, his chief counsellor. In such sorry plight, almost alone, and with not a soldier remaining to him out of his once numberless hosts, the vanquished monarch steered towards his own kingdom, hoping that at least he should arrive in time to save Biserta from the Nubians. But his voyage was delayed by contrary winds; and when at last he sighted the coast of Tunis, he learnt to his dismay that his great seaport had been sacked and burnt the day before; that Count Branzard and Sir Bucifar his lieutenants, with Sir Fulvus the commandant of the town, had fallen in the battle; and that the victorious Nubians had put the whole garrison to the sword, and were now masters over all the realm. Hearing this, the unhappy king would fain have slain himself in despair; but he was prevented by the wise King Sobrin. He dared not land, however, in his own dominions, but sailed away round Cape Bon, intending to take refuge in Egypt. For he had a treaty of alliance with the Soldan of Egypt, and hoped to persuade him to lend him an army, with which he might recover possession of his kingdom.

They had not gone above a day's sail, and were still but a little distance from the coast of Tunis, when the captain

of the pinnace came to Agramant and said: "Sir King, I perceive that a tempest is gathering off the land, and I fear that in this small boat we cannot weather it. But here to leeward lies a little island called Lampedusa, where I know of a creek which will afford us safe shelter from the gale; thither, if you take my advice, we will repair without delay."

"It matters little to me," replied the King, "whether I sink or swim: I had as lief perish here in the open sea as drag out a wretched life in exile from my country. But for the sakes of the others who are here with me in the boat, I will choose the safer course." So they steered immediately for the island, and there took shelter from the fury of the storm.

If you care to look it out in your maps, you will find that this little island of Lampedusa lies about eighty miles off the east coast of Tunis, nearly opposite the old town of Thapsus, where Julius Cæsar gained an important victory. I don't know whether anybody lives on the island now, but in the time of Charlemagne it was quite uninhabited; only the fishermen from the neighbouring coast used to repair thither at times, and hang out their nets to dry on the low brushwood with which it was covered. Hither came Agramant and Sobrin in their little pinnace, seeking shelter from the gathering tempest; and, as they sailed into the creek, they were surprised to see a large ship already anchored there. To their great relief this turned out to be the ship of their friend Gradasso, the King of China, who had departed out of France a day earlier than his allies, and had thus avoided meeting with Dieudonné's navy. He too had put in to Lampedusa in order to avoid the coming gale; so here were three of the principal Saracen leaders assembled together in this out-of-the-way little island.

When their first greetings were over, King Agramant told Gradasso the evil tidings from Tunis, and explained that he was now on his way to ask troops from the Soldan of Egypt, deeming that his only hope of recovering his dominions. But Gradasso exclaimed: "Do not thus, I entreat you, Sir King; surely you know the character of the Soldan, that he is a man of a treacherous heart, whose

promises are nought but deceit. Confide your cause rather to me; for I have thought of a way by which I may avenge you and restore you to your kingdom. You say that Count Roland has recovered his wits, and was one of those who took Biserta by assault; truly, if that is so, I rejoice exceedingly, seeing that all my life I have desired nothing so much as an occasion to fight with him. With that intent I came into Europe; and now, albeit I have obtained Durindana and his armour, which I chiefly sought, without doing battle against him, yet am I none the less eager to put his boasted prowess to the proof. Wherefore I will presently send a messenger to him, saying that I have the sword and armour that once were his, and challenging him to meet me here in single combat. And the conditions of our combat shall be these: if I am vanquished or slain,—and truly I purpose not to yield myself alive,—then he shall recover this sword and armour out of my hands; but if I overthrow him, he shall straightway return with all his companions to France, and deliver up your kingdom of Tunis into your possession." "Nay, my friend," answered King Agramant, "though your proposal is good in many ways, yet I cannot suffer you to fight my battles in this fashion. If Roland is to be challenged to single combat, it is I who ought to challenge him; and I will send him a message accordingly as soon as this tempest abates." Gradasso entreated that this enterprise might be left to him, but Agramant remained firm in his intention; wherefore the King of China said at last: "Take then your share of the fighting, Sir King; only seek not to deprive me of mine. Rather let us send to Roland, and challenge him to come hither with one companion, that we may fight two against two to decide the quarrel." "I am well content," replied King Agramant, "provided I bear my part in the undertaking;" and so the question would have been settled, but that Sobrin chimed in: "And what of me, I pray you? Am I to stand with my thumbs in my doublet, while you others wield sword and shield? Think not that I am too old to engage in such an encounter; by my faith, I am still as vigorous as ever I was in my youth, and my years have

but added experience to my strength." Sobrin only spoke the truth in what he said, as his two friends were most ready to confess; for he was of a strong and lusty old age, and his renown both for valour and prudence was great throughout all the world. Wherefore Agramant and Gradasso held that his claim to share their enterprise was just, and declared that they could not desire a better companion in arms. So it was decided that these three Saracen Kings should challenge the peerless Count Roland, together with any two of his comrades, to fight against them in the island of Lampedusa; and as soon as the tempest was overpast, they sent a messenger to the Count to bid him defiance in their names.

The messenger soon arrived in the Nubian camp, which was still pitched over against the ruins of Biserta; where he found Count Roland and his friends busily occupied in dividing the spoil among their soldiers. There he sounded his trumpet three times, and three times bowed himself before the Count; after which he delivered aloud the challenge, as the Kings his masters had bidden him. Never came sound more welcome to the ears of Roland, who saw here a chance of winning back his sword and armour from Gradasso, and his noble horse Gold Bridle from Agramant. So great was his joy that he loaded the herald with rich gifts, bidding him return with all speed to them that sent him, and say that on the seventh day from this he would be ready, together with two of his comrades, to meet them in Lampedusa, as they desired.

When the herald departed Count Roland called to his dear friends Sir Oliver and Sir Brandimart, and asked them: "O my friends, will ye bear me company in this fight?" And the noble Paladins answered him, saying: "We will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest us; but most of all to such an enterprise as this, which shall bring great honour to us all." So Roland chose Brandimart and Oliver to be his fellow-champions; and immediately they set about preparing themselves for the battle to come.

Of course none of the three had his own horse and armour to use; for those of Roland were in the possession of his enemies, while the other two had forfeited theirs to

King Rodomont, who had given them up, indeed, to Bradamante when she vanquished him, but only after their owners had sailed away from France. This placed our champions at a great disadvantage; nevertheless their valiant spirits were in no wise daunted, but they diligently sought out the best that were to be had in the camp, trusting in their valour and the goodness of their cause to make good the deficiency of their equipment. After that they had provided themselves as best they could, they walked together by the sea-shore, discoursing of their future battle; when lo! they beheld a gallant ship come sailing towards the place where they stood. Her mainmast was gone clean away, showing that she had encountered a terrible storm; but her foremast was still standing whole and sound, with the foresail set to the breeze. Nevertheless there was neither pilot nor crew to steer her, but she seemed as though the spirits of the air were guiding her. She struck at length upon the sands close under the eyes of our Paladins; whereupon they straightway put off in a boat to examine her, being curious to know what so strange a sight might mean. And when they boarded her, they found that she had indeed been abandoned by all her passengers; only they discovered in her a magnificent war-horse, a faultless suit of armour, and a sword of perfect temper, the equal of Durindana itself, on the hilt of which was graven in letters of gold the famous name "Balisarda."

You will have understood already, without my telling you, that this was the ship out of which Prince Roger had swum to the hermit's island; she had sailed thence all by herself to this coast of Biserta, and certainly nothing could have been more fortunate for the three friends than her timely arrival. Now as soon as Roland's eye lighted on the sword, he recognised it at once, even before he saw its name upon the hilt; for it had formerly belonged to him, but the thief Brunello stole it out of his keeping in the time of a former war. Wherefore he rejoiced greatly, and took it for himself, knowing well its priceless worth, since with its aid he had performed many of his most wonderful feats. But the other things he divided between his two

friends, giving Roger's well-fashioned armour to Sir Oliver, and the noble charger Frontin to Sir Brandimart. And thus each of the three champions found himself much better equipped for the battle than he had expected.

Being now provided with one good needful article apiece, and having no hope of making their equipment perfect, the Paladins next took thought for the adornment of their persons. On great occasions it was customary for the knights of those days to wear a close-fitting vest above their armour, which vest was wrought of the finest stuffs, and richly embroidered with any device that the wearer might choose. The three friends desired to observe this custom, more especially on such an occasion as the present, for this Battle of the Six Champions was an event the like of which had scarcely ever been seen. So Count Roland procured himself a vestment of cloth of gold, embroidered with scarlet thread; and the device of the embroidery was the Tower of Babel shivered by a flash of lightning, by which the Count signified that the pride of the Saracens should be shattered and brought low. Sir Oliver made choice of a purple vest, on which was wrought the figure of a milk-white hound lying down in an attitude of watchfulness, and having a collar and chain of gold around his neck, with the motto, "Till my lord come forth." By this device Sir Oliver represented his faithful love for his friend Roland, whose bidding he was always ready and eager to perform. But Sir Brandimart chose to appear in raiment all of sombre black, and the Lady Lilias his wife fashioned it with her own hands, embroidering it cunningly with threads of the same hue, and adding a black fringe richly designed in patterns of needlework, in which she sewed many pearls of great price. She wrought also the trappings of his horse Frontin in like manner, sparing no toil that her lord might be fitly apparelled; yet from the hour of beginning this work till that in which it was finished the gentle lady was never seen to smile, but seemed as one oppressed with a foreboding of woe. Never before had she known fear for the safety of her husband, though she had accompanied him in all his adventures; but now her spirit was troubled within

her, and the newness of her fear increased her grief, so that the tears stole down her beautiful cheeks, and her heart beat fast with double terror.

Now when their apparel was prepared, on the sixth day after they had received King Agramant's challenge the three Paladins hoisted sail and steered their course towards the island of Lampedusa. A fair breeze carried them swiftly over the waters, so that they came to the place the same evening, and pitched their tents upon the shore over against those of the Saracen Kings. The next morning, as soon as it was light, the six champions rose up from their beds and put on their armour. Then they came out of their tents and mounted their horses, and stood face to face upon the shore ready to begin the encounter. Man for man, they were very fairly matched, being all warriors of great renown; and if the Christians had slightly the advantage in prowess,—and certainly there was no one in the world quite equal to the mighty Roland,—their adversaries were by far the better equipped, which was a matter of great importance in those times. Count Roland, indeed, wielded Balisarda in his hand, but then his horse and armour were of inferior quality; Brandimart rode upon Frontin, that perfect steed, but the mail in which he was clad, and the sword that he carried, were far from equal to those which he had left in France; lastly, Oliver was armed in Roger's panoply, which was even better than his own, but he had great fault to find with both his sword and charger. The equipment of the Pagans, on the other hand, was perfect at all points; besides which, King Agramant was mounted on Gold Bridle, while King Gradasso wielded the famous Durindana, and was furnished with the armour that Roland had cast aside in the day of his madness.

As soon as they were assembled they recited the conditions of the combat, which each party swore solemnly to observe; then they took up their positions at a convenient distance from each other, laid their lances in rest, and spurred forward with one accord to the encounter. For this opening joust Roland was matched against the stately Gradasso, Sir Oliver encountered King Agramant, and Sir

Brandimart rode against King Sobrin. Now Oliver and Agramant shivered both their lances to the hilt without the least advantage to either, whereupon they drew forth their swords, and so continued their battle. But of the other two pairs, one champion on either side was borne to earth. For Count Roland's weakly charger proved no match for the powerful animal that Gradasso rode, but swayed to one side at the shock of their meeting, and then fell full length upon the ground. The Count, finding himself borne down by no fault of his own, made three or four efforts to raise up his horse; but at length, perceiving this to be impossible, he threw aside his lance, and drew out Balisarda from the scabbard. On the other hand, Sir Brandimart had unhorsed King Sobrin, but whether through the fault of the Pagan chieftain or his steed I cannot tell you, only I think it most likely that the latter was to blame, since Sobrin was too skilful a knight to be easily thrown.

Now Brandimart, seeing his first adversary on the ground, offered him no further violence, but turned to match himself against Gradasso, who had in like manner overthrown Count Roland. And the Count, perceiving Gradasso thus busily engaged, went to join battle with Sobrin, who was now on foot like himself. Raising Balisarda aloft, he struck hard at his adversary's crest, and vainly did Sobrin hope to parry the blow with his shield; for the good sword clave the shield in twain, though it was encircled with solid steel, and descended through it upon Sobrin's shoulder, rending the plates of mail, and piercing the flesh beneath with a grievous wound. Quick to press his advantage, the peerless Count dealt a second stroke, with which he thought to sever Sobrin's head from his body, but the wise king drew backward a step and avoided the full force of the blow. Nevertheless he could not escape it altogether, but it pierced through his helmet and laid him stunned and bleeding on the ground. Thereupon Roland supposed that he was slain, and turned to watch the fight between Brandimart and Gradasso, holding himself in readiness to succour his friend if need were. Brandimart, however, was gallantly holding his own, for though his armour

was poor and quite unable to resist the edge of Durindana, yet Frontin was so clever a charger, that of his own accord he would swerve to one side, or step backwards or forwards to avoid Gradasso's strokes; and so, partly through the instinct of his horse, and partly through his own great valour, the Paladin, in spite of the badness of his harness, was pressing his antagonist hard.

Seeing that his services were not needed just now, the Count thought he would take the opportunity to mount on horseback again. His own charger had broken his leg, but Sobrin's was still as sound as ever, and was quietly grazing at a little distance. Roland easily caught him, and vaulted into the saddle; and as soon as Gradasso perceived that he was mounted again, he desisted from his battle with Sir Brandimart, desiring to prove himself to the uttermost against the Count. So now Brandimart was "odd man out" (since Sobrin still lay helpless on the ground), while King Gradasso and Count Roland fought together with the sword. First Gradasso aimed a thrust at his opponent's breast, but Roland cleverly turned it aside, and brought down Balisarda like lightning on the head of Gradasso. Helmet, shield, and cuirass were all cloven by this terrible blow, which dealt the King three separate wounds in the face, breast, and thigh, and moreover destroyed the confidence which he had hitherto felt in his armour. For he had been persuaded that no weapon could pierce the wonderful arms of Hector, and with them on his body and Durindana in his hand he had deemed himself invincible. Now he perceived to his amazement that Balisarda in the hands of Roland could pierce even this faultless harness; nevertheless his spirit was not daunted, only he took more pains thenceforward to parry the blows of his antagonist.

All this time Sir Oliver and King Agramant had been continuing their combat on very equal terms, so that it was hard to know which had the better chance of victory. But presently King Sobrin recovered his senses and rose up from the ground; and seeing his liege lord hard pressed, he determined to give him such help as he could. So he went up silently and smote Sir Oliver's horse across the

houghs; and immediately the horse fell down, crushing the left leg of his rider under him. Thereupon Sir Brandimart, being mounted, took up the battle against King Agramant; while Sobrin made an assault on Oliver, who vainly struggled to draw out his foot from beneath the body of his horse. This he could not achieve; yet even lying on his left side, as he was, he managed to keep Sobrin at a distance with his sword; and he hoped in this manner to wear out the wise King's strength, since he perceived him to be sorely wounded and much weakened by loss of blood.

Meanwhile a terrible struggle was going on between Count Roland and King Gradasso: the Pagan had hacked off several plates from his enemy's harness, but had not yet been able to pierce his flesh; while Roland had plied his sword to better purpose, wounding Gradasso in the head, throat, and shoulder, besides those other cuts of which I told you. At last the Saracen grew furious at beholding his adversary whole and sound, while he himself was bathed from head to foot in his own blood; and with the energy of despair he lifted Durindana in both hands, and brought it crashing down upon Roland's head. Vainly did Roland essay to parry that fearful stroke; it cut through the crest of his helmet, defended as it was by triple steel; and all that his attempt at parrying could accomplish was so far to break its force, that it stopped short at the helmet's crest and clave not the skull beneath. Thus the Count suffered no loss of blood: nevertheless he was quite stunned for the moment by the shock, so that he reeled in his saddle, the reins dropped from his fingers, and his charger bore him helpless over the plain; while he would certainly have lost Balisarda to boot, but that it was chained by the hilt to his wrist.

Gradasso took advantage of his absence to help King Agramant against Sir Brandimart, who was bringing him into great peril of his life, having knocked the sword from his hand, and cut through the lacings of his helmet, so that the King's head lay bare to the blow. Now the gallant Brandimart was not expecting a second opponent, since he thought that Gradasso was fully occupied with Count

Roland, while Sobrin had fainted away anew from loss of blood. So the King of China came upon him unawares, and smote him through the helmet to the brain; so that he fell backward off his saddle to the earth, while a torrent of blood spouted from the wound, and his face grew pale with the livid hue of death.

Who shall describe the mingled rage and grief of Roland, when he recovered from his giddiness only in time to see his faithful friend lie dying on the ground? His heart was like to burst for sorrow, and his wrath was terribly kindled within him, as with a cry of "Vengeance! vengeance!" he rushed upon King Agramant to slay him. Whirling Balisarda round his head, he smote the King of Tunis across the neck and severed it at a single blow: down from the saddle fell the headless trunk, and the mighty African monarch was no more.

For the first time in his life Gradasso trembled with fear, when he beheld the manner of King Agramant's death; and when Roland made haste to assail him, he offered no defence at all, but stood as one bewildered to receive the death-blow. So Roland smote him beneath the lowest rib, and the sword passed through his body, and stood out a hand-breadth on the farther side. Thus died Agramant, the greatest ruler among the Saracens, and Gradasso, one of their bravest warriors; and they fell by the hand of Count Roland the Paladin, who avenged upon them the death of Brandimart his friend.

But when they were slain, Roland ran in haste to the place where Sir Brandimart lay, and raised the beloved head upon his knee, striving to stanch the blood which poured from the fatal wound. Then the dying knight opened his eyes and looked upon the face of his friend, saying: "O my friend, grieve not for me, seeing that my hour is come, and I am content to have it so. But by the love that thou bearest me, I beseech thee watch from henceforward over my sweet wife Lilias." And with that his noble spirit fled, and he died with his lady's name upon his lips.

Then Count Roland bowed his head and wept, for his grief was very sore. But presently he arose and went to

Sir Oliver, who was likewise in evil case. For he could not draw out his foot from under the body of his horse; and his leg was so bruised and crushed, that it seemed as if he must be lame for the rest of his life. But Roland moved away the carcass and set him free; and seeing that he could not stand upright, he called to his servants and bade them carry him gently to the ship. Next he found King Sobrin still alive, though his strength was nearly spent, and had him carried in like manner to the ship; where he dressed his wounds with his own hands, bidding him be of good cheer the while, and comforting him as though he were his own brother. For now that the battle was over, the noble Count felt no malice; but the bitterness was gone out of his heart, and his wrath gave place to compassion. Lastly, he took with him all the arms and the horses of the dead kings, among which he recovered Gold Bridle and Durindana and the panoply of Hector for himself: he took also the body of Sir Brandimart, that he might bury him as befitted his rank and worth. Then he sailed back to Biserta, having little joy in his glorious victory, seeing that it had cost him the life of the friend whom he loved above all the world.

But the bodies of Agramant King of Tunis and Gradasso King of China remained upon the shore in the island of Lampedusa; and there they were buried by the sailors who had come with them in the ships from France.

PART VI.

LAST ADVENTURES OF ROGER AND BRADAMANTE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE PALADINS FOUND ROGER ON THE HERMIT'S ISLAND; AND HOW THEY ALL RETURNED TO FRANCE.

COUNT Roland returned across the sea to Biserta, taking with him Sir Oliver his friend and King Sobrin, who was lately his enemy, both grievously wounded. He had won a splendid victory, recovering his horse and armour out of the hands of his foes, and delivering France from the fear of the Africans for ever; nevertheless he came not with songs and dances and the voice of merrymaking, as might befit the conqueror of so great a battle. His flag was hoisted half-mast high, and the sound of weeping and lamentation was heard on his deck, as the ship sailed to her anchorage near Duke Astulf's encampment; for all hearts were sore afflicted at the death of Sir Brandimart.

Now when Astulf beheld how the ship drew nigh, he said: "Surely the victory is ours; else our vessel would never have returned hither. Yet by the manner of her coming I fear some terrible calamity; for her flag flies half-mast high, and her crew seem as men who mourn over the loss of their chief." So he went out of his tent, and hied him down to the sea-shore, to welcome his friends and to hear their tidings. With him went also Sir Raynald, who had come unexpectedly to Biserta the evening before. For some rumour of King Agramant's challenge had reached him, while yet he sojourned with Charlemagne in Paris; wherefore he made great haste out of France, desiring to bear his part in the enterprise of his comrades. Yet for all his diligence he arrived a day too late, when

nothing remained for him but to learn the issue of their combat.

He therefore went down with Astulf to the beach, looking anxiously toward the approaching ship; and presently their worst fears were set at rest by seeing Roland come safe and sound towards them. The Count put off to shore in a little boat, and greeted his fellow Paladins in love and sadness, telling them how Sir Brandimart had fallen in the hour of victory: whereat their souls were vexed with sorrow, and the fiery Raynald exclaimed: "Would to Heaven that I were lying in his place; for I would willingly have given my life for his!" But Duke Astulf, the bluff, true-hearted Englishman, thought first of the desolate widow, and cried: "Alas for the sweet Lady Lilias his beloved! Verily our Brandimart is happy, in that he has met an honourable death; but who shall bear these sad tidings to her, and tell her that the joy of her life is turned to loneliness and grief? Or who shall comfort her in her measureless affliction?"

Thus spake Astulf out of the fulness of his heart; and Count Roland sighed heavily, as he answered: "Truly my heart is very sore for the sweet lady, who hath ever loved all the friends of her husband. But for thee, my Astulf, she hath shown especial affection; wherefore it is fitting that thou shouldest take this sad office upon thee. For ill tidings are most softened when they are heard from the lips of a friend."

So Astulf went to find the Lady Lilias, that he might tell her the heavy news, and give her what comfort he could. Now in the past night this gentle lady had dreamed a dream, which she interpreted as a message of affliction. She thought that she held in her lap the vestment of needlework which she had wrought so cunningly for her lord; only the fashion of the vestment was changed, for it was embroidered all over with crimson spots. And as she gazed upon it, Sir Brandimart appeared before her, asking her wherefore she had mingled crimson threads with the black; and she could not answer him a word, but fell to weeping, she knew not why. With the tears still in her eyes she awoke, and foreboded nothing but evil from her

dream. Therefore, when Duke Astulf entered her chamber, she rose up sorrowfully to meet him; and as soon as she looked upon his countenance, before he could utter a word, she knew that her lord was dead. Then a sharp spasm wrung her heart, her brain reeled, and a thick mist darkened her eyes; and she fell as one dead upon the floor. But when she recovered from her swoon, she spoke no word of lamentation, neither did any tear bedew her cheeks; only she sat gazing before her with blank eyes, from which the lustre was fled, and her face was as the face of a marble image. Presently, with a gentle motion of her hand she beckoned Duke Astulf to depart; and the good Duke, understanding that she would fain be left alone with her sorrow, retired out of her presence, and went to weep in his own tent.

The next morning the Paladins consulted together how they should bury their comrade with fitting honour; and Count Roland said: "Let us go into Sicily and build him a tomb on Mount Etna, that the mountain of fire may be as a beacon to show where he lies." So they laid his body on a bier and covered it with cloth of gold for a pall, and so carried it into Sicily by sea. There they buried Sir Brandimart upon the slopes of Mount Etna; at sunset they buried him with great pomp, as befitted so valiant a warrior, and from all the country round great multitudes of people assembled to join the Paladins in paying honour to his memory. Before the body was committed to the grave, Count Roland came forward to bid his friend a last farewell; and near him stood the Lady Lilias, clad in raiment of black from head to foot. The Count laid his hand gently on the bier, and said: "O faithful, dear, and valiant comrade, who art lost to us here for a while, forgive me that I lament thy death; truly thou hast gained great happiness and everlasting renown, but I am left alone to bewail thy absence, and the joy of my life is ended, since thou art no longer beside me to share it. Lonely am I from henceforth, and lonely is thy gentle wife; nevertheless despair not, O sweet Lady Lilias, but take comfort in remembering the manner of thy lord's departure. For verily there is no knight in Christendom

who doth not envy him so noble a death; and as his life was perfect in valour and all virtue, so the ending of it hath brought him renown that shall never die, so long as loyalty and truth are held in repute among mankind."

Thus spake Count Roland in the anguish of his heart; and thereupon the priests took the body of Sir Brandimart, and lowered it into the grave, after they had performed the accustomed rites of burial. Then Roland gathered together carvers and builders, and bade them raise a costly sepulchre above the vault; and they built it of porphyry and alabaster, with marbles of divers colours, beautifully carved by the hands of a cunning craftsman. All the time that they were building it, the Lady Lilias departed not from the place, but stood silently looking on their work, that everything might be done in due order. From the hour in which she knew that her lord was dead, she neither wept nor spake aught to any man; and when the sepulchre was finished, she opened the door and went in, and laid herself down beside the body of Sir Brandimart. There her faithful heart broke for sorrow, and she died in the tomb of her beloved; and when the people of the place heard of her death, they left her lying in the place which she had chosen, and sealed up the door of the sepulchre, that no one might enter it thenceforward.

Meanwhile Count Roland and the other Paladins had returned to Biserta, whence they purposed to set sail for France. First, however, they wished to find some physician of repute, who might be able to heal Sir Oliver and King Sobrin. For Oliver's leg had been so crushed and mangled beneath the weight of his horse, that he was not yet able to stand upright; while Sobrin lay still in great weakness and peril of his life, by reason of the fearful wounds which Count Roland had dealt him. Roland therefore consulted with Astulf, Raynald, and Sansonet, concerning this matter, which put them all in great perplexity. But when the captain of their ship understood what they wanted, he came to Roland and said: "Sir Count, I know of a little island off the coast of Italy, whereon dwells an aged hermit, who is the most skilful leech in all the world. Men resort to

him from all the neighbouring lands, bringing their sick to be healed by him; and none ever return unsatisfied out of his presence. He was formerly a priest in Rome; and it is said that he has great skill in magic arts, which he uses only in the service of mankind. For though he dwells alone upon his island, he receives all who come to him for aid, and heals their infirmities by his spells. If you will take my advice, you will carry your friends thither in the ship; and doubt not but that the good old hermit will restore them to their former health."

The captain's proposal found favour with the Paladins; wherefore they carried their baggage on board ship, and set sail the next morning for the hermit's island. All this time Prince Roger had been living there with the good old man, who knew from his magic books every circumstance of his young guest's life, as well as everything that should befall him in the future. So when Roger had renewed his strength with meat and drink, the hermit needed not to ask him who he was or whence he came; but to the Prince's great surprise he began to reprove him in mild and kindly fashion, because he had followed after King Agramant instead of joining himself to the Emperor as he had promised. But when he found Roger already penitent for that fault, he exhorted him to lose no more time in professing himself a Christian; "for I know," he said, "that you have long intended to adopt our religion, and here is a fitting opportunity for doing it." So Prince Roger was baptized by the old hermit, and afterwards continued to dwell with him on the island, profiting much by the good man's instruction and conversation. Many times he might have left him if he had chosen; for the people who came to be healed would gladly have taken him back with them to the mainland. But the hermit always said: "Wait yet a while, and in a few weeks you shall travel in worthy company to France." So Roger waited, as he was bidden; and to amuse his leisure the hermit prophesied to him of his future marriage with his lady, telling him also about the glorious family that should descend from him, even as Melissa had prophesied to Bradamante.

One morning, as they walked together upon the cliff, they saw a large ship coming towards them; whereupon the hermit said to his companion: "Yonder comes the vessel in which you must return to France." For his wonderful books of magic had shown him that this was the Paladins' ship, and he wished Prince Roger to make the voyage in their company. Now when the Courteous Prince heard who these travellers were, his heart leaped up for joy; for he longed exceedingly to look upon the face of Count Roland, whom all men esteemed the very pattern of knightly excellence. So he promised to do in all things as the hermit should advise him; and the old man answered: "It is well said, my son; get thee therefore to the cell, and make ready such victuals as we have, that we may worthily entertain these strangers. Meanwhile I will go alone to meet them, and give them the aid which they seek; and afterwards I will bring them into thy presence."

So Prince Roger departed and prepared a breakfast for all the company, while the old hermit went down to meet the Paladins on the shore. When they were come thither, he gave them courteous welcome, saying: "Noble knights, I bid you welcome to this my island, and I ask you not wherefore you are come, because I know your errand, and am purposed to do that which you desire. Bring hither, therefore, Sir Oliver your comrade, that I may heal him of his hurts without delay." Then the Paladins carried Sir Oliver on a litter, and laid him at the hermit's feet; and the old man repeated an incantation, laying his hand upon the mangled limb, so that its strength was restored, and Sir Oliver stood up whole as before. Next Count Roland brought King Sobrin to the hermit, saying: "My father, heal this man also, I pray you, who is a very wise and valiant king; and remember not that he was aforetime our enemy, for the former things are past and gone." So King Sobrin also was healed, and presently declared that he was minded to become a Christian and serve the Emperor Charlemagne thenceforward as his vassal; whereat the whole company rejoiced greatly, and very gladly received him as their ally.

Then said Count Roland: "My father, what recompense can we make thee for these great benefits which thou hast given us?" And the old hermit answered him: "My son, I desire no reward, seeing that I long since vowed my life to works of charity. But if you will do me a pleasure, come all of you and eat with me in my cell, wherein is a very valiant knight who desires to return with you into France." So he went before to show them the way, and they all followed after him and came to his cell among the rocks. There they found Prince Roger waiting to receive them; and the first to recognise him was Duke Astulf, who gave him hearty greeting. For he remembered the Fortunate Islands, where he would still have been planted in the shape of a myrtle-bush but for Roger's lucky interference. Sir Raynald also knew the Courteous Prince, and said to him: "Of a truth, Sir Prince, I once fought against you with all my might, being constrained by my duty to my lord the Emperor. But think not that I bear you ill will; nay, for I know what services you have rendered to our house, so that I esteem you as the dearest among my friends. For I am well aware how you saved Richardetto my brother from the stake, and afterwards put to flight the traitors of Maganza, delivering my cousins out of their hands. Wherefore, I beseech you, let us be as brothers from henceforth, that I may strive to repay you the benefits that I have received at your hands." Nothing could have given Roger greater pleasure than such a greeting from his lady's brother; and his joy was multiplied when Count Roland welcomed him as his comrade, saying: "If all that I hear of thee be true, thou art like to prove the best knight of us all."

The Paladins abode three days upon the island, till King Sobrin had been baptized by the hermit; after which they invited Prince Roger to accompany them, since it was time for them to make the best of their way to Paris. Meanwhile Roger had opened his heart to Sir Raynald, telling him that he loved the noble Bradamante above all the world, and that he knew from her own mouth that his love was returned, since they had plighted their troth one to the other many months ago. And Raynald, whose affection for

the young Prince increased daily, replied that nothing could be more to his mind than such a marriage for his sister, and he would do all in his power to promote it by speaking to his father and mother on Roger's behalf.

Then in great happiness they all went together on board the ship, after they had taken leave of the hermit and thanked him for all his kindness; and soon afterwards they arrived in the harbour of Marseilles, where they mounted their horses and rode to the Emperor's Court.

CHAPTER II.

HOW BRADAMANTE WAS PROMISED IN MARRIAGE TO THE GREEK PRINCE LEO; AND HOW ROGER HELPED THE BULGARIANS TO DEFEAT THE PRINCE AND HIS FATHER.

WHEN the Paladins arrived at Marseilles, they sent a messenger before them to tell the Emperor that they were come back completely victorious, with Roger and Sobrin in their company; and having bidden this messenger make all the speed he could, they themselves followed by easy stages in his wake. Every day the French knights took more and more pleasure in consorting with Prince Roger, since over and above his valour, which he had nobly proved in the late war, they found him to be discreet and prudent beyond his years, while his courtesy was such as no man that ever lived could excel. Sir Raynald especially loved him with an ever-increasing affection, and desired nothing so much as to bring about his marriage with Bradamante; of which Count Roland also heartily approved, saying that nowhere could the noble damsel meet with a worthier husband. Wherefore the young Prince was happy beyond expression, deeming his difficulties as good as ended, seeing that Roland and Raynald joined in promising to further his cause.

Now when Charlemagne heard that his champions were approaching, he took thought how he might receive them worthily, wishing to show them such honour as they deserved, and to make manifest before all the world his gratitude for the victory which they had gained. To this end he rode forth to meet them a mile beyond the gates of

Paris, attended by all the persons of most honour at his Court. The King of England, his faithful ally, rode at his side, followed by Dukes and Princes from every country in Christendom; Marfisa, also, and Bradamante had their places in his train, together with all the knights of Clairmont, and fifty other Paladins of France. After the knights came their squires, and these again were followed by pages and men-at-arms, making up as brave a cavalcade as any one could wish to see. Moreover, the whole roadway was lined with multitudes of the people, who waited in orderly silence to greet their deliverers. But when Count Roland and his companions drew near, the numberless throng burst forth into shouts of welcome and triumph: cries of "Roland and Clairmont!" "France and England!" "Long live the Paladins!" and a hundred other such acclamations, rent the air, and each of the champions was greeted by name with huzzas that might have been heard a dozen miles away.

With majestic mien, made doubly noble by the joy that illumined his countenance, the Emperor advanced to greet his nephew, and held him long embraced, with such love as a father might show to his only son; after which he turned to the other Paladins, each in his turn, and bestowed marks of his favour upon them all. Then Count Roland and Sir Raynald took Prince Roger by the hand, and presented him to the Emperor; and Charlemagne embraced him also, saying: "As thy father was before thee, so be thou; for he was prudent, brave, and courteous, which things are very excellent virtues in a knight. Follow therefore in his footsteps, and doubt not but that I will promote thee to great honour; and this I will do for thine own sake not less than for his." When the Emperor had finished speaking, Marfisa came forward and fell upon her brother's neck; and the noble Bradamante, his lady-love, greeted him also with still greater joy in her heart; only she showed it not openly because of the people that stood by. Then the Emperor bade Roger mount again and ride by his side, leaving nothing undone whereby he might show him honour; the King of England rode at his other hand,

as before; next came Roland and Raynald, Astulf, Oliver, Sansonet and Sobrin, after whom followed the rest of the procession in the same order as they had kept in coming forth. Thus with great pomp the champions made their triumphal entry into Paris; and when they came within the walls, they found yet further signs of the people's joy. For the whole city was keeping high festival in celebration of their victory; the streets through which they were to pass were carpeted with crimson cloth, and spanned by triumphal arches of green boughs, which bore the motto: "To the Deliverers of the Empire:" the houses also were gay with banners of various device, and from every balcony and window the ladies and damsels of the city rained down flowers upon their heads as they passed. Meanwhile the bells of the great Cathedral rang a joy-peal, which was taken up by every belfry round about; while the procession moved to the sound of loud trumpets and clear-sounding fifes accompanied by joyous laughter and deafening applause from the crowds that thronged the roadway. In this manner they rode till they came to the door of the palace, where the Emperor entertained them for many days with tournaments, banquets, and dances, the like of which had never been seen since France became a kingdom.

Of all the gay company in the palace, Prince Roger was at first the gayest, thinking that he should soon be able to marry his Bradamante; but presently his gladness was turned to tribulation, when he found a fresh impediment to his desire. For to his dismay he learned that the parents of his lady were bent on marrying her to another, and it seemed as if nothing would turn them from their purpose. As you may suppose, the renown of Bradamante had gone forth into all lands; everywhere minstrels sang the praises of this noble damsel, who was a match for the fairest ladies in beauty and for the bravest knights in prowess; and all men envied Duke Hammon of Montalbano, her father, who had such a son as the Paladin Raynald, and a daughter of such matchless excellence. Now among others who had heard of her fame was the young Prince Leo, only son to the Greek Emperor who

reigned in Constantinople at that time. This princely youth was so struck with admiration at the report of her many virtues, that he fell in love with her by mere hearsay, and exclaimed: "Truly this most noble damsel shall be my lady, and I will be her knight; neither will I wed any other maiden but her alone." Then he went to the Greek Emperor, his father, and said to him: "Father, I pray thee send an embassy into France, even to the illustrious Duke Hammon of Montalbano, and entreat him to give me his daughter Bradamante to wife. For I have heard many wonderful things concerning her, by which I am persuaded that she excels all the maidens upon earth; wherefore I am steadfastly resolved to marry her with all convenient speed."

The old Emperor was greatly pleased at his son's words, and willingly granted his request by sending three of his chief nobles ambassadors into France. These Greek nobles came to Montalbano just at the time when Sir Raynald was with his comrades at Biserta; and when they inquired after Duke Hammon, they were told that he was now sojourning at the Court of Charlemagne in Paris. So they turned and went thither with all speed; and there they found Duke Hammon and the Duchess Beatrice his wife, together with Bradamante and all her brothers, except Sir Raynald. And when they had obtained an audience of the Duke, they came into his presence, and bowed themselves before him, saying: "Most noble Duke, we are sent to thee by our Lord the Greek Emperor, who rules in the City of Constantinople. For Prince Leo, the only son of our Lord, is smitten with vehement love for thy daughter, the noble lady Bradamante, having heard the report of her beauty, and of her many virtues, whereof the fame is noised abroad through all countries. Now therefore our Lord greets thee by our mouth, and desires that thou wilt give him thy daughter, that he may marry her to his son Prince Leo." When Duke Hammon heard this, he rejoiced exceedingly that such honour was shown to his daughter, and answered: "Noble sirs, I thank the Greek Emperor from my heart for his great goodness, and I am

altogether inclined to do as he desires. Nevertheless, I pray you, wait yet a few days, till my son Sir Raynald be returned, with whom I am wont to consult in all weighty matters. But when I have spoken with him, I will call you again, and give you an answer to carry back to your lord; and doubt not but that I shall answer as you desire, seeing that it is a great honour for me to give my daughter in marriage to the Greek Emperor's heir."

The ambassadors departed well pleased with the success of their mission, and Duke Hammon went to tell his wife of the offer which they had made him. The Duchess Beatrice was still more delighted than her husband at the news; for she set great store by dignities and riches, and thought it a fine thing that her daughter should one day be Empress of the Greeks. But imagine poor Bradamante's consternation when she heard of this unwelcome honour which her parents were so eager to thrust upon her. The Duchess spoke of it as a thing already decided, bidding her submit herself to the will of her father and mother, and rejoice in the good fortune which had befallen her; and the noble damsel was so obedient a daughter that she would not contradict her parents openly. Only she determined in her heart that she would die sooner than marry any one but Roger; and when she was left alone, she burst into passionate weeping, vowing amid her sobs that she would be true to her plighted word. And whenever her mother spoke of her marriage with Prince Leo she answered never a word, but heard her in respectful silence, while her heart was consumed with grief.

In the midst of her distress Sir Raynald returned with Prince Roger and his other companions; and then Duke Hammon thought that he might give the Greek ambassadors their final answer, never doubting but that his son would approve of his intention. But to his surprise Sir Raynald informed him that he had already promised Bradamante to Prince Roger, who had long since won her affections, and that Count Roland heartily approved the marriage. For they were persuaded that the Courteous Prince was in every way worthy to be her husband. At this Duke Hammon

grew very wroth, and severely rebuked Sir Raynald for his presumption in thus betrothing his sister without the knowledge of her parents. And though Raynald showed him plainly that in nobleness of lineage, as well as in every knightly virtue, Prince Roger was the equal of any man alive, yet the old Duke's anger was not diminished, for he had set his heart on wedding her to Prince Leo. Still more angry was the Duchess Beatrice, who was dazzled by visions of Leo's wealth and future empire, so that she railed bitterly against her gallant son, and in every way, both openly and in secret, used her influence to prevent her daughter's marriage with Prince Roger.

Thus the hopes of these noble lovers were once more turned to despair, just as they seemed on the point of being fulfilled. Many a time did Bradamante implore her parents to send away Prince Leo's ambassadors, and suffer her to marry her chosen knight; her prayers and tears were all in vain, for their hearts were hardened against her. At last the noble damsel lost patience, and resolved to take the matter into her own hands: she would not indeed marry Prince Roger against their will, but she took counsel with herself how she might escape from any other marriage. "For if I owe respect to them," she thought, "have I not also a duty to my Roger, to whom I plighted my troth these many months since? And if my parents desire me to wed Prince Leo, is not my true knight's suit approved by my brother Raynald and the peerless Count Roland my cousin, who are of more repute than all the other knights in France? Verily the right is on my side, and I will not yield myself a slave to this stripling Greek." With these words she put on her armour, and girded her sword by her side, and so went into the presence of Charlemagne. There she bowed herself before the Emperor, and said: "Sire, if ever I did you good service, either in your war against the Saracens, or in the government which you trusted to my care, I beseech you grant me a boon." "Speak, my daughter," answered the great Emperor, "and fear not to say all that is in your heart; for whatever your request may be, I grant it freely in due recompense of your deserts."

Then Bradamante took courage, and her heart was strengthened within her, as she lifted up her voice and said: "Sire, I ask nothing but what is honourable and just; and my request is this, that you will not suffer me to be given in marriage to any man that is not my equal in valour. But if any man desire to take me to wife, let him come hither and win me in the lists, maintaining his cause against me in battle from sunrise until sunset. If I am vanquished in this contest, or if I fail to get the better of my adversary, I will loyally submit myself to his will and go with him whithersoever he pleases; but if I prevail against him and overthrow him, then, I beseech you, command him to go empty-handed away, and seek himself some wife better suited to his condition. For a wife ought to obey her husband with love and reverence; but how can I yield such honour to one who is weaker than myself?" "My daughter," replied Charlemagne, "I swear to you by my royal sceptre that this thing shall be ordered according to your wish; for your request is seemly and prudent." And immediately he commanded his heralds to make proclamation of his will in this matter, establishing the conditions which Bradamante herself had proposed.

Thereupon the noble damsel thanked him heartily for his kindness, and returned to her father's house in great contentment. For she knew herself able to hold her own against any knight who was likely to woo her; only, if Prince Roger should essay the ordeal, she would joyfully suffer defeat at his hands. But when her parents heard what she had done, their wrath was kindled yet more fiercely against her, and they vowed that she should marry Prince Leo in spite of her obstinacy. "Bid him come, then, and win me in fair fight," replied the maiden; "since otherwise the Emperor will not suffer him to possess me." And in this her parents could not gainsay her: for they dared not disobey the Emperor, whose word was law throughout his dominions. But in violent anger they took her away to Montalbano, and shut her up a prisoner in her own chamber, refusing to give her her liberty till she submitted herself to their will.

Now when Roger heard what had happened, he knew not whether to be glad or sorry. On the one hand, he understood his lady's intention, and rejoiced to find that she remained faithful to him through all temptations. But then he saw not how he was ever to win her for his bride, since her parents kept her closely imprisoned in their castle. Often, when he thought thereon, his rage against them grew so vehement that he was minded to take her out of their hands by force; but then he remembered that she was their daughter, and loved them in spite of their harshness, so that for her sake he could not do them any hurt. "But this rival of mine," he thought, "has no claim upon her love, and upon him I may execute my vengeance. I will pursue him to the ends of the earth; and wherever I encounter him, I will surely punish him for the ruin of our happiness. For this Leo is the cause of all our wretchedness, and he at least shall not escape due chastisement."

Burning with the fierce desire to avenge his wrongs on the rival who had caused them, he put on his armour and girded Balisarda to his side; then he took his good horse Frontin out of the stable, and made haste to ride to Charlemagne's palace. (I should tell you, by-the-bye, that Count Roland had freely given him back his horse and sword, when he heard the story of their loss. Even though he himself had a claim of long standing to the possession of Balisarda, he renounced it willingly in Roger's favour, as a mark of the esteem in which he held him; and this he could the better afford to do, as he had now recovered Durindana for himself. And Sir Oliver, in like manner, restored the armour which he had found in Roger's abandoned ship, and received his own suit from Bradamante, who had won it out of the hands of King Rodomont.) Thus equipped at all points as in former days, the Courteous Prince took leave of Charlemagne and the Paladins, saying that he was minded to go in quest of adventures till such time as Bradamante should be able to marry him. Only he took not his own famous eagle for a device, seeing that he wished to be unknown in all countries through which he might pass; but he chose a white unicorn for his crest, and blazoned it

on a crimson field, and so set out on his journey towards the East.

Eager to challenge his rival to battle, and thinking to find him at home in Constantinople, Roger passed through Munich and Vienna, and so came to Buda-Pesth in Hungary. Thence he followed the course of the river Danube, keeping always along its northern bank, till he came to the city of Belgrade, which is now the capital of the kingdom of Servia. Beneath the walls of Belgrade the river Save falls into the Danube; and here Prince Roger was astonished to find the very enemy whom he sought. For the tribes of the Bulgarians, who were at that time a very fierce and powerful nation, were engaged in warfare against the Empire of the Greeks; and the hostile armies had met together in this place, with only the river Save to separate them. The Bulgarians under their King Vatran held the town of Belgrade and the northern bank of the river; while the Greek legions, commanded by their old Emperor and his son Prince Leo, were encamped on the opposite side of the Save. At the moment of Prince Roger's arrival, the Greeks were seeking to throw a bridge across the stream, and the whole force of their enemies was assembled under arms to resist them. The Greeks outnumbered the Bulgarians by four to one, and had boats ready prepared to form a bridge; yet they encountered so stubborn a resistance that they could not accomplish their design. But while the main body of his army was thus engaged, Prince Leo took with him twenty thousand chosen men, and led them by a long circuit, out of sight of the enemy, to a ford a long way up the stream, where there was no one to oppose his passage. There he easily crossed the river, and hastened along its northern bank to fall upon the flank of the Bulgarians. His sudden attack, which he delivered with great vigour, so distracted their attention that they were no longer a match for their enemies in front; and the Greek Emperor succeeded at last in laying his bridge, over which he passed with all his army to succour his son. Thus the Bulgarians were attacked in front and on the flank at once; their King Vatran was cut down by Prince Leo in the act of rallying

his squadrons, and his death was the signal for a general flight towards the city.

But by this time Prince Roger was come up; and understanding how matters stood, he resolved to help the Bulgarians without delay. For his soul was bitter against his rival, Prince Leo, so that he determined to defeat him and his father, and if possible to win their dominions for himself, thinking: "If I can accomplish this, Duke Hammon must own that I am worthy to marry his daughter; and here is a splendid opportunity." So he laid his lance in rest, and spurred Frontin forward against the Greeks, rallying the flying Bulgarians by the way, and promising them certain victory. The first whom he encountered was a knight clad in splendid armour, with a rich vest of crimson and gold, who rode at the head of the Greek cavalry. He was nephew to the old Emperor, being the only son of his sister Theodora; and his uncle, who loved him like a son, had appointed him second in command under Leo. But the poor youth held not his honours for long; for Roger's lance clave through shield and breastplate, breaking them as if the good steel had been brittle glass, and piercing through his body till the point stood out a handbreadth beyond his back. Leaving him dead upon the field, Roger drew forth Balisarda and dashed into the midst of the Greeks: everywhere men fell beneath his blows as the ripe corn falls before the scythe; here he clave through a waist, there he cut off a head; one he pierced through the heart, from another he struck off an arm; and in short, he had not been ten minutes at work before more than a hundred lay dead around him.

Now when the Greeks beheld what strokes he dealt, there was none of them so bold as to risk an encounter, but with one accord they turned and fled from before him. So that the aspect of the battle was suddenly changed; the Greeks, who were lately the pursuers, turned and rushed helter-skelter across their bridge, while the Bulgarians recovered from their confusion, and pressed upon their enemies after the manner of conquerors. All this Prince Leo beheld from the top of a hill, where he had taken up his position; but he could do nothing to remedy the disas-

ter, because not a man of all his troops would follow him down to battle. In vain did the young Prince upbraid them with their cowardice; in vain he offered to risk his own life, if a single soldier would accompany him; they were all unmanned by the sight of Roger's prowess, and thought only how they might keep out of his way. Great was Prince Leo's dismay at seeing his whole army thus vanquished by a single adversary; nevertheless he could not refrain from admiring the stranger's valour. For he was a generous, noble-hearted lad, who could cheerfully submit to being defeated by a better than himself; and when he beheld how Prince Roger prevailed, instead of hating him, as a meaner foe would have done, he thought only how he might gain his love, saying: "Verily this stranger is the most valiant knight that ever I saw, and I would fain be friends with all gallant men. Though he is now mine enemy, I may one day be able to make him my friend; and, friend or enemy, I would rather lose all my dominions than see him come to any harm." He had but little time, however, to indulge these generous thoughts, for his army was in full flight on every side, and there was nothing left for him but to make as orderly a retreat as he could. So he sounded his trumpets, and led back his men by the way that they came; and as soon as he had crossed the river, he made haste to rejoin his father. The Greek Emperor, meanwhile, had escaped back across his bridge, which he had broken down behind him to check the enemy's pursuit; and Leo came up with him about sunset in the town of Semendria, which lies about twenty miles from Belgrade on the road to Constantinople. There they rested one night, but the next morning they resumed their march, that they might get farther out of reach of the enemy. And two days later they arrived safe and sound at Nissa, a strongly fortified town, in which they shut themselves up with all the troops which remained to them after the battle. But many had fallen on the field, and many more were drowned in the Save while attempting to make good their escape; besides which, six or seven thousand remained prisoners to the Bulgarians, so that nearly half the Greek army had been destroyed by Prince Roger's valiant attack.

CHAPTER III.

HOW PRINCE LEO DELIVERED ROGER OUT OF PRISON.

WHEN this great victory was gained, the Bulgarians gathered in crowds round Prince Roger, greeting him with worship and honour, and hailing him as the deliverer of their nation. Their chief men also came into his presence, and bowed themselves to the earth before him, saying: "Behold, our lord King Vatran is dead, leaving no heir to his title and inheritance; now therefore, O most noble Sir Knight, we beseech thee take this vacant office upon thyself, and rule over us as king and captain of our hosts. For verily thou hast preserved us this day from our enemies, and thy might hath brought us from destruction unto victory: to thee we belong, since without thee we had been all dead men; and if thou wilt remain with us to govern us, we shall ever have the advantage over our adversaries." Thus spoke the chief men of the Bulgarians, and all the multitude approved their words, shouting with one voice: "The Knight of the White Unicorn shall be our King!" Then Prince Roger lifted up his visor, and uncovered his face to make reply; whereat all the people applauded again, delighting in the beauty of his countenance. And Roger saluted them courteously, and said: "Sirs, this is a great office to which ye call me, and I have done but little to deserve such honour at your hands; nevertheless I refuse it not, but will be king, captain, or whatever else ye are pleased to name me. Only I must leave you for a while; since I cannot handle staff or sceptre, nor enter Belgrade as your sovereign, till I have overtaken the Greek Prince Leo, and challenged him to mortal com-

bat. To this end I came hither out of France, having a bitter quarrel against the Prince; for he hath done me a grievous wrong, and I cannot rest till I have avenged it upon his head."

With these words he took leave of the Bulgarians, who went up into the city with great joy, and made preparation for crowning him King on his return; but Roger turned and followed in the track of Prince Leo. He set out about the hour of sunset, having been detained till then by his allies, and continued his pursuit all night; but he could not overtake his rival. For Leo had the start of him by many hours, and had made great haste as far as Semendria, while Prince Roger was compelled to travel slowly through the hours of darkness.

About daybreak he found himself near a town, in which he resolved to rest for a few hours; and this he did more for Frontin's sake than for his own, since the good horse had carried him a day and a night without any repose. So he rode to the inn and saw Frontin comfortably settled in a stall; then he went into the house, and called for meat and drink to be set before him; and when he had breakfasted, he lay down upon his bed and fell asleep. Now while he was sleeping, there came to the place a knight of Roumelia, who had fought the day before in the Greek Emperor's army, and had narrowly escaped death at the hands of our Prince. As soon as this knight beheld the device on Roger's shield, he knew that the sleeping man must be the enemy who had discomfited the Greek army the day before; wherefore he ran in haste to the castle, and told the governor what he had seen. And when the governor heard it, he summoned a company of men-at-arms, and bade them go to the inn and seize the Knight of the Unicorn while he slept, and so bring him captive to the castle. Guided by the knight of Roumelia, these men-at-arms entered Roger's chamber by stealth, and quietly slipped strong cords round his limbs; while the valiant Prince slept peacefully, not suspecting that any harm would befall him, and only awoke as his captors drew the cords tight round his wrists and ankles. Then he struggled wildly to set him-

self free, striving to burst his bonds asunder by his great strength; but the ropes were thick and new, so that he could not break them, and for greater security the men-at-arms added fetters and handcuffs of iron to hold him fast. Thus they carried him bound and helpless to the castle, and delivered him into the hands of the governor.

Then Prince Roger was loaded with chains and thrust into a dungeon, while the governor sent a messenger to the Greek Emperor to inquire his pleasure concerning the prisoner. The messenger found his lord at Nissa, where he was busy entrenching himself with the remnant of his host, expecting that the Bulgarians would soon come up to besiege him, now that they had such a captain as the Knight of the Unicorn to lead them. But when he heard that this dreaded champion was a prisoner, his fear was changed to exultation, and he cried: "Now will we take swift vengeance on these Bulgarians, who will never be able to stand against us without the aid of this stranger." So he bestowed a rich gift on the messenger in recompense of his tidings, and bade him return in haste to him that sent him, and say: "Sir governor, the Greek Emperor Constantine approves thy deeds, and will richly reward thee for thy zeal in this matter. Now therefore hearken to his commands, and perform them faithfully according to thy duty. He bids thee send him the Knight of the Unicorn in chains to Nissa, that he may deal with him as he pleases at his leisure; thou shalt send also the horse and armour of the Knight, which the Emperor desires to keep for a trophy." Thereupon the messenger departed to carry back these orders to the governor, while the Emperor Constantine sent in high glee to call Prince Leo, to whom he gave the joyful news of their enemy's capture.

Now when Leo heard that the strange knight was taken prisoner, he also rejoiced exceedingly in his heart; but his joy was more noble than the joy of his father Constantine. For the generous youth desired above everything to win Prince Roger for his friend, being struck with admiration of his wonderful prowess, so that he remembered not against him the injury which he had done to the Greeks, but

thought: "Now I shall have an opportunity to do this noble knight good service, by which I may gain me his love and gratitude for ever. When he comes hither, I will speak to my father on his behalf, that he may be loosed from his bonds and treated with such honour as befits his worth. And if by this intercession I gain his friendship, truly I shall not need to envy Charlemagne himself, or any other leader of mighty men; for by the aid of this champion my throne will be firmly established, and I shall ever prevail against my adversaries."

This was the design of Prince Leo, by which he hoped to win both pleasure and profit; and this was the cause of his joy when he heard that Prince Roger was taken captive. Very different were the feelings of his aunt, the Princess Theodora, whose only son had been slain by Roger in the battle. For she was a savage and cruel woman, whose delight was in revenge; wherefore she considered not that her son had fallen in fair and honourable combat, but hated his conqueror as though he were a murderer, and thirsted after a vengeance contrary to all laws of chivalry and honour. If she had been a lady of noble heart, she would have procured herself a champion to challenge Prince Roger to combat on equal terms; and this would have been a just and lawful method of requital. But she cared not a jot for equity or honour, and her baleful spirit longed only for revenge, no matter by what means she obtained it.

Meanwhile the unhappy Prince had been taken from the dungeon and placed in a cart; his hands were bound behind his back, his feet secured in iron fetters, and his body encompassed with chains, so that he could scarcely move a muscle. Moreover, a guard of fifty soldiers surrounded the cart, after which followed Frontin in charge of a groom, with his master's sword and armour strapped across the saddle. In this manner they conveyed the Prince to Nissa, where they took him out of the cart and carried him into the presence of the Emperor. Then the Princess Theodora threw herself at her brother's feet, weeping passionate tears of rage and grief, and crying: "A boon, Sir Emperor, a boon! I conjure thee to grant me a boon!"

The Emperor tried in vain to raise her, saying that it was not seemly for a Princess of Greece to kneel in the dust; but she cried out yet more vehemently: "I will not rise till thou hast sworn to grant my request." So the Emperor Constantine was constrained to promise her all that she asked; whereat the fierce light flashed from her eyes, and she said: "Give me then this felon who slew my son, that I may punish him as my heart desires." "Take him, my sister," replied the Emperor, "and do with him according as thou wilt; but I would thou hadst asked any other favour at my hands." For he knew that Leo desired to save the stranger's life, and it grieved him to balk his only son of his desire; but his word was pledged to Theodora, and he could not go back from his promise.

The cruel Princess, therefore, took Roger to her castle, which was built in the midst of the city; and there she designed to take his life in requital for the life of her son. His mere death, however, was not enough for her savage vengeance; but she intended to kill him by slow degrees and with lingering tortures. To this end she shut him up in an underground cell, built in the foundations of a tower, into which no ray of light ever penetrated; and she appointed one of her servants, in whom she trusted, to be his gaoler, ordering that only a morsel of bread and half a cupful of water should be given him each day, that he might die miserably by slow starvation.

For more than a week Prince Roger remained in this horrible cell, enduring such hardship as no words can describe, so that he longed for death to put an end to his pains, since he saw no hope of escaping alive from his tormentors. But the generous young Leo remembered him, and plotted day and night to deliver him, thinking it foul shame that a gallant knight should endure such outrage. One evening, at last, he managed to enter his aunt's castle by stealth, where he hid himself till all the household were sunk in sleep. Then he lit a torch which he had brought with him, and crept down the steps to the door of Prince Roger's cell. In front of the door stood the gaoler, who would fain have opposed his passage; but Leo cut off his

head with one stroke of his sword, and took the key of the dungeon from his belt. Then he opened the door and went in; and in a corner of the cell he saw Prince Roger lying loaded with chains and brought very near to death. Immediately Leo set down his torch, and began striking off the bonds from Roger's limbs, comforting him the while with hopes of deliverance, and saying: "Most noble Sir Knight, admiration of thy prowess has possessed my heart; yea, I am bound to thee in chains of love, which are far stronger than these fetters and links of iron. Accept my homage therefore, I beseech thee, and grant me the honour of serving thee both now and for the rest of my life; since for thy sake I would willingly renounce whatsoever I possess in the world. Know also that I am Leo, only son of the Greek Emperor Constantine, whose whole army fled before thy single might when we fought beneath the walls of Belgrade. On that day I beheld thy valour, and vehemently desired to win thee for my friend, though in truth I hold myself scarce worthy to be thy squire. Now therefore I am come to deliver thee out of prison, at no small peril to myself if my father and the Princess Theodora should discover the matter. But I care nothing for what may befall me, neither hold I their unjust anger in any estimation, in comparison with the pleasure of doing thee service and saving thee from a shameful death."

With these words Prince Leo struck off the last of the chains; so that Roger stood before him free of limb, but more than ever confounded in spirit. For he was amazed at the young Greek's generosity, and stood abashed to think that this was the rival whom he had come forth to slay; and although Leo knew not who he was, and of course had no suspicion of his love for Bradamante, yet Roger would have chosen to be under an obligation to any one else, rather than to the man who had caused the ruin of his happiness. Nevertheless, the more he thought thereon the greater became his gratitude to his preserver, to whom he rendered heartfelt thanks for his great kindness, saying: "Most noble Sir Prince, from henceforward my life is no longer mine own, for thou hast rescued it from destruction

this day, and hereafter I hold it only at thy pleasure. Whither thou sendest me, I will go, and whatsoever thou requirest of me, I will surely perform it, if haply I may requite thee in a measure for the kindness thou hast shown me in this place. For truly thy nobleness has won my heart, so that I count it a pleasure to do thee service; and I confess that thou hast laid upon me a debt, which I can scarcely hope to repay thee in full."

When Prince Roger had thus spoken, he crept silently after his guide; and together they stole up the narrow steps and along the winding passages of the castle, till they came to the outer wall. There Leo unfolded a rope, which he had brought coiled round his waist for this purpose, and made it fast to one of the battlements. Then he bade Roger lower himself down into the street, and as soon as he saw him safe at the bottom, he slid after him in like manner down the rope. Thus these noble rivals escaped out of the castle of Theodora, and came together to Leo's lodgings, where the young Prince kept Roger hidden for many days.

In the morning word was brought to Theodora that her prisoner had escaped, and that his gaoler lay slain on the dungeon steps; whereat the savage Princess burst into a frenzy of rage, tearing her hair and beating her breast in fury, and uttering terrible threats against all her people for having kept such careless guard. Also she sent men to search for him throughout the city and in all the neighbouring country, and made proclamation that any man who harboured him should be punished with death. Only no search was made in Prince Leo's lodgings, because no one ever suspected him of having delivered the most formidable of his enemies; so the generous youth kept Roger safe in his chamber, and brought him food and drink with his own hands, that no one else might share their secret.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ROGER OUT OF GRATITUDE OBTAINED BRADAMANTE FOR PRINCE LEO, AND WENT AWAY TO DIE OF HIS GRIEF.

WHILE Prince Roger was engaged in this adventure, a change for the better befell his lady Bradamante. For Charlemagne was very angry with her parents when he understood how hardly they used her; wherefore he sent a messenger to Duke Hammon, commanding him to bring his noble daughter back to Paris without delay. The old Duke dared not disobey his Emperor's orders, so he quitted Montalbano immediately, and journeyed back with his wife and daughter to the Court. There Bradamante found great comfort in consorting with Marfisa, who encouraged her to hope for the best, reminding her of Prince Roger's loyalty, and consoling her as best she could for his absence. The kind enchantress Melissa, too, came now and again to visit her, and cheered her with assurances that all would be well in the end, though she had yet one more trial to endure. Also all the Paladins did their utmost to serve her; and especially her brother, Sir Raynald, and the peerless Count Roland, her cousin, were forward in showing her kindness, desiring fervently to see her wedded to her lover. And, best of all, the Emperor himself watched over her welfare, compelling her parents to treat her fairly with such honour as became her station; for he loved her very tenderly, and esteemed her equally with the best of his knights. Moreover, he sent out heralds over all Europe to proclaim the conditions under which she was to be wooed; and these conditions were the same which the damsel herself had pro-

posed—namely, that no man should have her to wife who could not maintain himself a whole day long against her in the lists.

Now it chanced that this proclamation was made in Nissa, where the Greek Emperor lay entrenched with his army, about a week after Leo had saved Prince Roger's life. And when the Greek Prince heard the conditions his heart grew heavy with grief, since he knew that he could not perform them. So he returned to his lodging, and entered into the chamber where Roger lay hidden; and his countenance was clouded with sorrow. Nevertheless he would not utterly renounce his hopes, but took counsel with himself how he might win Bradamante for his bride in spite of the conditions which the herald had proclaimed. Since his strength was too little to prevail against her in the lists, he resolved to compass his desire by craft; and presently he thought of a stratagem well suited to serve his purpose. His plan was to persuade Prince Roger—of whose name and state he still knew nothing—to take his place and maintain his suit in the lists, with such precautions that no one should suspect the deceit; for he felt assured that the prowess of his guest was sufficient to prevail against Bradamante. So he called him to his side, and expounded all the matter to him from beginning to end—as if poor Roger did not know it only too well already!—earnestly entreating him to engage in the contest under his name, since he could see no other chance of success. This unlucky proposal cut Prince Roger to the quick, so that he felt as if a dagger had pierced his heart; for how could he renounce his lady, whose love was as the breath of life to him? Or how could he consent to deceive her by such a stratagem as this, which would ruin her happiness, as well as his own, for ever? Yet Prince Leo, who made the request, was the man who had saved his life, and Roger had solemnly promised to undertake whatever he might require. So he was placed in a great strait betwixt love and gratitude, and earnestly wished that he had died in prison and so escaped this greater sorrow. In vain he tried to turn Prince Leo from his purpose, saying that so deceitful an action was

unbecoming in a knight of high degree; the crafty Greek was set upon obtaining Bradamante, and any means seemed good to him which could help him to attain his end. And at last, finding all argument useless, Prince Roger bent his eyes upon the ground, and said: "Sir Prince, though I approve not this thing, yet I will do it for the gratitude which I owe you:" whereupon Leo was mightily pleased, and overwhelmed his reluctant champion with unwelcome thanks; while Roger endured his misery in silence, though his heart was like to break with its agony.

The Greek Prince was impatient to put his cunning plan into practice; so the next morning he rode away from Nissa, accompanied by Roger and two squires, with whom he set out on his way to Paris. He took care that Frontin and Balisarda should be restored to their owner, together with the armour in which he had come from France; but the recovery of these treasures gave little joy to Prince Roger, who continually lamented in secret over his misfortunes. "Was ever any man so unlucky as I?" he thought: "Whatever be the issue of this contest, it must bring death to me, and wretchedness to my lady for evermore. For if I maintain the struggle, I shall lose Bradamante, without whom I cannot live; while she will be married to Prince Leo, and will spend her days in misery, bewailing her separation from the knight of her choice. But if I lose the battle, it will be because she prevails against me, and slays me; and in this case also I die, leaving her to mourn me with a double sorrow. Sweet, indeed, to me were such a death at the hands of my lady; but she would be very grievously afflicted, when she found that she had slain her lover." Thus the unhappy knight knew not whether to dread defeat or victory the most: many times he thought of feigning weakness, and allowing Bradamante to slay him, which seemed the only means of saving her from a hateful marriage; but then again he remembered that he had promised to be Leo's champion, and that he was bound in honour to do his best. Everywhere, in truth, was misery, and in any case he was resolved to die. These gloomy thoughts beset his mind perpetually, so that he could

hardly speak a word to his companion throughout the journey, which they accomplished in great haste without meeting with any accident or adventure.

When they arrived within sight of Paris, Prince Leo would not enter within the walls, but pitched his pavilion in a meadow half a mile outside the gates. Thence he sent one of his squires to salute the Emperor Charlemagne in his name, and to acquaint him with the purpose of his coming; whereupon the Emperor rode forth from the city in great state, to greet Leo with the honour due to his rank. As soon as they had exchanged salutations Charlemagne recited the conditions under which Bradamante must be wooed; to which the Greek Prince answered that he knew them already, and was prepared to maintain his suit on those terms. The Emperor therefore appointed the contest to begin the next morning at sunrise, after which he returned to his palace and told Bradamante what he had done.

The noble damsel left the choice of arms to her adversary; and Roger elected to fight on foot with the sword, because otherwise Bradamante would certainly recognise Frontin, whom she had tended with her own hands at Montalbano. Also, the better to conceal himself he put on Leo's vest above his armour, and took his rival's shield upon his arm. This shield was emblazoned with the two-headed eagle of gold, the device of the Empire, and no one had a right to bear it except the Greek Prince and his father Constantine; so that every one who beheld it must suppose that the knight who bore it was Prince Leo. Neither would Roger gird himself with his own sword Balisarda for this battle, fearing that, if he wielded it, he might do his lady a mischief against his will: wherefore he left it in the tent, and armed himself with Leo's Damascus blade, which was a much less terrible weapon. While he was busy with these hateful preparations, his heart was torn with anguish, such as no words can describe; nevertheless, he spoke no word of complaint, but went silently forth to his doom, rather than break the covenant which he had made with his preserver.

During the night the lists were marked out in a meadow

close beneath the walls of Paris; and thither went Roger at the appointed hour, fully accoutred, and with the visor of his helmet closed, so that no man could discern his face. At the same moment Bradamante entered the enclosure from the opposite end; Charlemagne took his seat upon a throne overlooking the barriers; and all the Paladins ranged themselves round their Emperor, to watch the progress of the combat. As the sun rose above the horizon, the heralds sounded their trumpets, and these noble lovers began their struggle.

Even as Roger had formerly striven against Sir Raynald, attempting only to save himself from injury without harming a hair of his opponent, in like manner, but with tenfold greater caution, he now fought against his lady Bradamante. Not a cut or thrust did he deliver by which he might bring her in any peril; only he defended himself from her blows, which he parried with the utmost skill, so that she could gain no advantage over him. And all the people applauded his moderation, supposing him to be the Greek Prince Leo, and saying one to another: "Verily this Prince is a courteous knight, and loves the noble damsel well, since he seeks not to hurt her in his own defence."

Very different was the desire of Bradamante, who believed herself to be fighting against her true love's rival, and put forth all her strength to overwhelm him. Like a high-spirited charger when he waits impatient at the barrier, champing the bit and pawing the ground with his hoofs, with nostrils wide distended, and ears pricked to catch the signal for the jousting; such did this gallant damsel appear in her eagerness, as she waited for the rising of the sun. And even as the awful tornado, which bears the thunder-cloud in its bosom, rushes headlong over sea and land, stirring the turbid ocean to its depths, and whirling the dust of the earth in clouds to the skies, while the beasts of the forest crouch timidly in their lairs, and the shepherd drives his frightened flock to shelter; even so at the trumpet's signal did Bradamante pluck her sword from the scabbard and burst in fury on her lover. But like the rooted oak, which bends not to the northern blast, blow it

never so furiously; or as some mighty rock raises its firm peak high amid the raging waves, and scatters them in foam and spray, though they cease not day and night from their smiting; so did the valiant Roger stand firm against her onset, and turn aside the storm of her assault. Vainly she aimed her blows at head or shoulder; vainly she tried to pierce the joints of his harness, or cut through the lacings of his helmet; hour after hour wore on, and brought no change in the combat; till at last the day was spent, the sun sank down in the west, and Brandamante had gained no victory.

Then Charlemagne bade the combatants stand apart, and gave sentence that Prince Leo had won the noble Bradamante for his wife; whereat the damsel mournfully hung her head, and returned in great tribulation to the city. The hot tears streamed down her cheeks, her heart throbbed as though it would burst her bosom, and a faint trembling seized upon her limbs; indeed, I think she would have died outright for sorrow, but that she remembered the words of Melissa, who said that she would have one more great trial to overcome, but that all would be well with her in the end.

Meanwhile the unhappy Roger stayed not to unbuckle his helmet, or loose the mail from his body, but mounted on a little palfrey, and galloped desperately away to the pavilion, in which Leo had lain concealed throughout the day. There the Greek Prince flung his arms round his rival's neck, embracing him again and again with transports of joy, and crying that nothing which he could do would be sufficient recompense for so great a service. But Roger answered him never a word, being unable to speak for sorrow; silently he threw down the imperial shield, and put off his borrowed raiment, taking again his own device of the White Unicorn, and girding Balisarda to his side. Then he made a sign that he was weary, and would fain take a little repose; whereupon Prince Leo led him to his own tent, and there left him to take his rest as he desired.

But at midnight Roger rose up from his bed, and arrayed himself in all his armour; then he went out quietly

from the tent, and put the saddle on his noble Frontin; and leaping upon his back, he bade no farewell to his companions, neither was any man aware of his departure, but he rode forth alone into the darkness. All night long his steed carried him over hill and dale, through vast forests of oak and pine, where was neither path nor habitation of man; and Roger perceived not where he was nor whither he was going, for his soul was benumbed with grief.

At length the daybreak roused him from his reverie, and looking round, he found himself close by a dense and shady thicket. Here he determined to die, since the happiness of his life was destroyed, and only death could deliver him from his misery. First he took the saddle and bridle off his horse, and gave him his liberty, saying: "O my Frontin, had I the power to reward thee as thou deservest, thou shouldest lack nothing that earth could furnish to content thee. But now I am poor and lonely, having lost all that could yield me pleasure in the world; wherefore I am minded to lie down and die, since she who once fed and tended thee in Montalbano is parted from me for ever. Take, then, thy liberty, thou best of chargers, which is all that I have left to bestow on thee, and go whithersoever thou listest, being no longer in subjection to any master." With these words he patted Frontin's neck, and turned to lay himself down in the thicket; but the faithful animal would not move from the place, and continued gazing with wistful eyes into the careworn face of his master. Then Prince Roger put off his armour, and stretched himself on the moss beneath the bushes, where he lay quietly awaiting his death; and hard by the noble Frontin kept his place, standing motionless as a brazen statue, as though he shared the sorrow of his lord and longed to ease his distress, if only he could know the way.

CHAPTER V.

HOW PRINCE LEO FOUND ROGER STILL ALIVE, AND RESTORED BRADAMANTE TO HIM; HOW ROGER SLEW THE TERRIBLE RODOMONT; AND HOW THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

THOUGH Roger and Bradamante might resign themselves to their misery, such meekness was not at all to the taste of the great Princess Marfisa. She had determined that these noble lovers should be married, and when she made up her mind on any matter she generally managed to bring it to pass as she wished. So the morning after the battle she clad herself in her armour, and rode to the Emperor Charlemagne's palace; and when she was admitted to his presence, she cried in a loud voice: "Justice, Sir Emperor, justice for my brother Prince Roger, who is suffering a grievous wrong! Know that he was betrothed to the lady Bradamante before ever this Prince Leo was heard of, and I will not suffer him to be robbed of his just rights in his absence. In my hearing they plighted their troth, on the day when Bradamante drove back the Saracens into Arles; and to him must the damsel be married, if there is any sanctity in oaths and promises. But if any man dare dispute what I say, I will prove its truth in battle against him; and there lies my glove for a gage." With these haughty words the Princess threw down her gauntlet upon the pavement, and looked round to see if any one would take it up, but not one of the Paladins came forward, since they all believed and hoped that her words were true. Charlemagne, however, was greatly perplexed when he heard her

story, and called one of his pages, to whom he said: "Run quickly to the house of Duke Hammon, and summon hither the noble lady Bradamante." So Bradamante came in haste to the palace and into the presence of the Emperor, who asked her if it were true that she was betrothed to the Courteous Prince Roger. To this question the damsel could give no answer in words, but blushed and cast her eyes upon the ground, plainly confessing by her silence that Marfisa had declared the truth. At this all the Paladins rejoiced, and protested that she ought to marry her chosen lover, seeing that she had plighted her faith to him before ever Prince Leo came to France.

But Duke Hammon of Montalbano, her father, who had accompanied her to the palace, was furiously angry, and cried aloud that Prince Leo had fairly won her in the lists, and that no one else should be her husband. He complained, also, that he ought to have had notice of Roger's claim before Leo was allowed to risk his life in the combat; but this complaint was cut short by Sir Raynald, who reminded his father that he had told him of Bradamante's betrothal while the Greek Prince's ambassadors were still awaiting his answer. Convicted of error on this point, Duke Hammon was still as obstinate as ever in opposing Prince Roger's claim, notwithstanding that all the Paladins gave their voices in its favour; while the wise Emperor inclined neither to the one side nor to the other, but appointed a day on which he would deliver his judgment, and meanwhile listened impartially to both their arguments.

Now while the confusion of tongues was yet great in the council-room, Marfisa came forward with a fresh proposal, and said: "While my brother Prince Roger remains alive, no other man can wed Bradamante; now therefore, if Prince Leo desires to have her, let him find out my brother and challenge him to single combat. For whichever of them can slay the other will live thenceforward without a rival for her hand." Marfisa spoke thus because she was sure that the Greek could not stand against Prince Roger; and her counsel seemed good to Charlemagne,

who sent a messenger forthwith to propose this plan to Prince Leo.

When the Greek Prince heard of this proposal, he accepted it immediately with great joy, for even now he had no idea that it was Roger himself who had fought on his behalf the day before, and he thought, "If only my Knight of the White Unicorn will fight this battle also in my name, he is certain to triumph over my rival." So he went to his companion's tent to ask this second favour at his hands, but the Knight of the White Unicorn was nowhere to be found. Supposing that he was gone away for an hour or two, Leo sent out his squires to seek him, but the squires presently came back saying that they could find no trace of his whereabouts. Thereupon the Greek Prince mounted his horse and set out himself in quest of his friend; day and night he persevered in the search, traversing all the neighbouring country for many miles round, yet he never would have found out his hiding-place if he had been left to his own endeavours.

Happily the kind enchantress Melissa was still watching over the welfare of our lovers, and was resolved that Roger should be succoured before grief and starvation could kill him. So she conjured up a spirit of the air, whom she transformed into the likeness of a palfrey, and taking her seat upon his back, she rode to meet Prince Leo. As soon as she came within sight of him she began to weep and implore his assistance, saying, "Gallant Sir Knight, if thy heart be as noble as thine aspect, come quickly, I pray thee, and relieve the most valiant knight in all the world. Through an act of high courtesy which he lately performed, he is brought to a pitiful pass, so that he is like to perish if he meet not with speedy aid. Hasten, therefore, I entreat thee, hasten, and suffer us not to lose the bravest of our warriors." Now when Leo heard this appeal, he thought, "Surely this warrior in distress must be the Knight of the Unicorn whom I seek;" wherefore he besought Melissa to lead him with all speed to her friend.

They had not far to go, for they had met each other in a glade of the forest, so very soon they came to the thicket

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where Roger had lain down to die. It was now the third day since his fight with Bradamante, and all this time the wretched knight had tasted neither food nor drink, so that his strength was rapidly ebbing away, and the flesh was almost worn from off his bones. Still he ceased not to lament his misfortunes, though his voice was grown small and weak; and especially he grieved for Bradamante, knowing that her misery would be equal to his own. In this state he was discovered by his rival, who overheard some words of his complaint, by which he understood that love was the cause of it; nevertheless he knew not yet that this mourner was Prince Roger, nor that he was bewailing his separation from Bradamante.

So he drew near and threw his arms about Roger's neck, calling him brother and dearest friend, and uttering sweet words of consolation fit to soothe the vehemence of his grief. At last he said: "Behold, my brother, I have yet another enterprise for thee to undertake, which will divert thee from too much pondering on thy sorrow;" and so he went on to tell him of Marfisa's proposal, entreating him to defeat Prince Roger as he had already defeated Bradamante. At this strange idea of doing battle against himself our hero could not refrain from a melancholy smile, as he answered: "Sir Prince, when you know who I am, you will be glad that I should die here, as I desire. For I am that Roger whom you hate; yea, I am the chosen lover of Bradamante." On hearing this astonishing avowal, Leo stood at first stock still from sheer amazement, with mouth and eyes wide open, so that you might have taken him for a statue of Surprise. Much he wondered at the freak of fortune, which had so bound up his rival's destiny with his own; but far greater was his astonishment when he mused on Roger's noble generosity, which had led him to ruin his own happiness rather than disobey the call of gratitude. As he thought thereon his old nobleness of soul came back, and he despised himself for having devised so mean a stratagem as to let another take his place in the combat. So he fell again upon the neck of his friend, and embraced him with double love, crying: "O my brother, if thou hadst told me this

thing before, I had surely yielded in thy favour. Thou art worthy, and I am unworthy; grant me pardon, I beseech thee, for my fault, and take thy lady to thyself; for I willingly renounce a claim which I never could rightfully maintain." Thereupon Roger embraced Leo in his turn, promising that he would be his friend for ever; his eyes sparkled with joy, and the best part of his strength was restored, when he felt again the hope of winning Bradamante for his bride. So he laid his hand upon Frontin's bridle—for the noble horse had never deserted him all this time—and vaulting lightly into the saddle, rode back with Prince Leo to Paris. But Melissa had vanished as soon as she saw that the rivals were reconciled, considering that her labour of love was now accomplished.

The two Princes rode together to Paris and presented themselves at the Court of Charlemagne, where Leo explained the truth of all the matter, humbly begging Bradamante to pardon him for having used such deceitfulness to obtain her. The noble damsel willingly forgave him, since her soul was possessed with happiness; and when the Emperor understood the affair, he rose up from his throne and said: "Hearken, all ye Paladins of France, while I pronounce my judgment in this case. Since it is Roger who won Bradamante by withstanding her a whole day in the lists, let him take her for his bride without delay, and I myself will be present at the marriage to deliver her into the hands of her husband." Thereat all the bystanders raised a mighty shout, applauding the judgment of their ruler, and crying: "Roger and Bradamante! Honour to the knight! Honour to the damsel! Long live the noble House of Clairmont! Long live Prince Roger and his bride!" Even Duke Hammon and the Duchess Beatrice could no longer refuse their consent, since Charlemagne had sanctioned the marriage; and they were constrained to acknowledge that Roger well deserved their daughter.

So the marriage was fixed to take place on that day fortnight; and it was graced by such an assemblage of gallant knights and noble ladies as the world never saw before or since. In the great Cathedral of Paris Prince

Roger was wedded to Bradamante by the good Archbishop Turpin; and Charlemagne gave away the bride, as he had promised in delivering his judgment. The Kings of England, Ireland, and Denmark were there, and only the King of Scotland was absent, because he was still mourning for the loss of the loyal Prince Zerbin his son. There too were princes, dukes, and counts from every country in Europe, as well as the whole brave company of Paladins, who rejoiced to welcome Roger as their comrade. The gentle Olympia also, now Queen of Ireland, was present; princesses, duchesses, countesses, were numbered by the hundred; and there was no lack of noble and beautiful dames of lesser degree. All these left the cathedral when the marriage was over and walked through the streets in procession to the palace, where Charlemagne had provided a feast of unequalled splendour; for he insisted on treating Bradamante as though she were his own daughter.

Now when they returned to the palace, they were met by three of the chief men of the Bulgarians, who were come to make Roger King over their people. For they had discovered that he was the Knight of the White Unicorn, who had gained them the great victory at Belgrade; and they had heard also that he was gone with Prince Leo into France. Wherefore they chose three of the most honourable among their chiefs, and sent them as ambassadors into France, to entreat the Prince to come and be their ruler. Roger willingly accepted the offered kingdom, and promised to go and be crowned in Adrianople three months hence; and this thing was a great joy to the Duchess Beatrice, who found that her daughter would be a powerful Queen after all. Prince Leo also was greatly delighted, and concluded a treaty of alliance with Roger on the spot, binding himself to make amends for the mischief caused by the war, and engaging that there should be peace and friendship between the Greeks and the Bulgarians thenceforward.

Then the guests all sat down to the marriage feast, after which they spent the evening in dancing and other festivities; and in order to do full honour to the occasion, the Emperor Charlemagne proclaimed a splendid tournament

to be held throughout the following week. Here all the knights of Christendom met together to joust; and Roger proved himself equal to the best of them, overthrowing great numbers of his antagonists, and holding his own against the peerless Count Roland himself. No man grudged him his victories, for he was loved and honoured by them all; and the days passed merrily by in joyous and noble entertainment.

But on the last day of the week, when the tournament was already ended, and the guests were seated at supper, there rode up to the palace a warrior of gigantic stature, whose armour was covered with raiment of black, and whose charger was decked in black trappings. This stranger came face to face with Roger, who sat at the right hand of the Emperor, and cried in loud and insolent tones: "I am Rodomont, King of Algiers, and I challenge thee, Roger, to battle, that I may take vengeance upon thee for thy villainy. I say that thou didst betray thy lord, King Agramant, and didst desert him in the hour of his misfortune; and for this I will punish thee with death before the setting of the sun." "Thine accusation is a falsehood," answered Roger, "and that will I prove upon thy body; for I clung to my lord King Agramant even after he had broken the truce, by which my allegiance became due to the Emperor, according to the oath which the King himself had sworn."

Thereupon a great clamour arose among the Paladins, each desiring to maintain Roger's cause against King Rodomont, since they said that it was not fitting for a bridegroom to peril his life in such a contest. But Roger answered them courteously, saying that he must needs defend his honour with his own hands; wherefore he armed himself in haste for battle, and rode forth upon Frontin to meet his accuser. In furious wrath they met together, and both lances were shivered to the hilt; Roger's point pierced the shield of his adversary, and broke off against the armour beneath, while Rodomont's lance flew upward in a thousand splinters, and could do no harm to the panoply of our hero. Both horses fell to the earth, overthrown by the

shock of their encounter; but the knights raised them up again in a trice, and straightway assailed each other with the sword. Then did Roger prove his might with Balisarda against King Rodomont, wounding him many times in the head and shoulder, while the terrible Algerian could draw no drop of blood from his enemy's veins. For more than an hour they strove together, dealing each other terrible blows; but still Roger remained unwounded, while the Pagan's armour ran red with his blood. At last our champion found his opportunity, and thrust Balisarda through Rodomont's helmet into his brain, so that the giant fell crashing to the earth, and lay dead at the feet of his conqueror.

They buried the terrible King where he fell, in front of the Emperor Charlemagne's palace; and there was no man found to lament for him, since he had been a savage and pitiless tyrant all his days. But King Roger and Queen Bradamante lived happily together for many years, and reigned over their subjects, the Bulgarians, in great prosperity; and their happiness was completed by the birth of a goodly family of children, who grew up as brave and beautiful as their parents.

THE END.

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